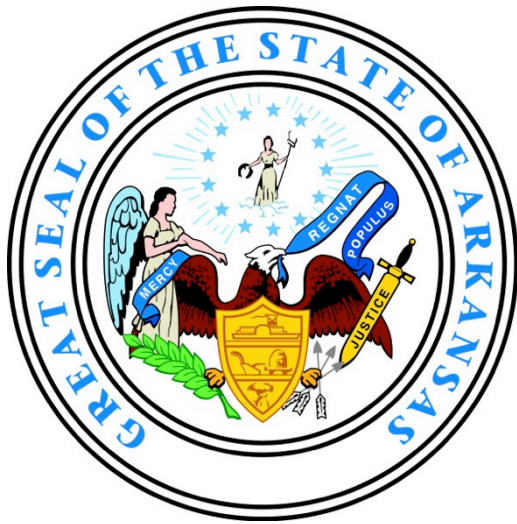


Arkansas

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge

Application for Initial Funding

CFDA Number: 84.412A



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“Our goals and ambitions will be nothing less than the very best that is possible. To aim lower is unacceptable. Anyone who has made the journey from where I started to where I am today knows that absolutely anything is possible.”

Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe,
Inaugural Address, January 9, 2007

(A)Successful State Systems

Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development

Arkansas is a state that believes in the unlimited potential of its children. It is, after all, a state where a child from a town of 98—and born into poverty—can become the current governor, and where a low-income child from a town called Hope can become a two-term president of the United States. It is the potential of our children, and the strong belief that risk factors like poverty, disability, and geographic isolation should not be the determinants of a child’s future, that guide the state’s early childhood agenda.

The state’s commitment to the unlimited potential of its children is reflected in over two decades of funding, policies, and initiatives that prioritize young children with high needs. The sections below articulate the state’s unsurpassed commitment to young children with high needs and describe the strong foundation upon which to base an ambitious, yet achievable agenda for early childhood systems reform. This foundation includes:

- A strong, coordinated early childhood **governance structure**;
- Political, stakeholder, and public **support for early childhood reform**;
- Clear statewide **early learning goals** approved by the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission;
- Early childhood funding that places a **high priority on serving children with high needs** and their families with high-quality programming;
- One of the nation’s most well-funded and highest quality **pre-kindergarten programs**;
- **All of the elements of a high-quality early childhood system** defined by this grant including Early Learning and Development Standards for infants and toddlers and 3- and 4-year-olds; a fully implemented, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS); each component of a comprehensive assessment system; an early childhood workforce and professional development system; a fully

implemented statewide kindergarten entry assessment; and an early childhood data system and effective data practices;

- Strong early childhood to K–12 **linkages**;
- A strong system of **higher education**;
- A highly dedicated **practitioner community**;
- An **innovative** spirit

The vision discussed in A (2) is vigorously supported throughout the state; has received buy-in from the early childhood stakeholder community; is grounded in a strong rationale; and focuses on building on the state’s current early care and education system to **increase coordination**, to ensure **greater participation of children with high needs in high-quality early learning programs**, to support **a stronger early childhood workforce**, and to **promote stronger child outcomes**.

Arkansas’ Early Childhood Demographics

Arkansas is home to approximately 235,000 children birth–5, a majority of whom are in at least one high-needs category.¹ The overall poverty rate in Arkansas is 19.5 percent—fourth highest in the nation—with the percentage of children under 5 living in poverty being much higher at 32 percent.² As table (A)(1)-1 indicates, the percentage of children birth to school entry who are defined as “low-income” in the state (below 200 percent of the federal poverty line) is quite large. Nearly 60 percent of Arkansas children birth to kindergarten entry—almost 140,000 children—live in low-income households.

In Arkansas, being low-income is only one way the state identifies a child as having high needs. In addition, children can be eligible categorically for early childhood services like the state’s pre-kindergarten program if: (1) their parents lack a high-school diploma; (2) they were born to a teen parent or with a low birth weight, (3) their family has a history of substance abuse; (4) they receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); (5) they are part of the child welfare system; (5) they have a developmental delay; or (6) they are Limited English Proficient.

¹ Estimates derived from 2010 Census data, published by Kids Count Data Center. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#AR/2/0> Retrieved September 9, 2013.

²The overall poverty rate was estimated using data from the 2010 and 2011 American Community Surveys. See Bishaw, Alemayehu (2012). *Poverty: 2010-2011*. American Community Survey Briefs. Census Bureau.

The child poverty rate was estimated using 2010 Census data published by Kids Count Data Center. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#AR/2/0> Retrieved September 9, 2013.

Children in Arkansas far exceed national averages in many of these risk categories. For example:

- Each year, roughly 12 percent of Arkansas births are to teen mothers ($N = 4,793$). This figure represents 53.6 births per thousand compared to the national average of 31.3.
- In 2011, there were 3,140 children birth–2 served under Part C of IDEA and 13,275 children 3–5 served under Part B of IDEA in Arkansas, for a total of 16,415 children. These numbers represent is 7.0 percent of the total birth–5 population—nearly double the rate of children birth–5 served nationally (4.4 percent).
- Arkansas has 3,442 children birth–5 in the state’s foster care system, a figure (0.6 percent) comparable to the percentage of children birth–5 in foster care nationally (0.6 percent).³
- Arkansas has the fifth highest child homeless rate in the country,⁴ with an estimated 7,918 children ages birth through five who are homeless.⁵

Although not considered a high-immigrant state with just 4.4 percent of its population being born outside of the United States, this percentage has nearly doubled from 2.8 percent since 2000.⁶ In terms of a percentage increase, Arkansas is fourth in the nation for growth of its foreign-born population.⁷ Latino children comprise about 12 percent of the child population under 5, which is more than double the percentage in 2000. Accordingly, the number of children who are dual language learners also has grown. In 2013, 3,865 Limited English Proficient (LEP) children entered kindergarten, representing over 10 percent of the children who enrolled.⁸ In

³ Estimates of national foster care numbers are from the HHS AFCARS report No. 20, published in July 2013 and containing estimates for 2012. The number was divided by the total population of children birth to five in the United State to derive the percentage.

⁴ Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as Amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, *Analysis of 2005–2006 Federal Data Collection and Three-Year Comparison*, National Center for Homeless Education, June 2007. Number of children includes the estimated number of children ages 0–5 who are not yet enrolled in school.

⁵ The National Center on Family Homelessness (2008). Arkansas- America’s Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness. Retrieved from: http://www.homelesschildrenamerica.org/pdf/report_cards/long/ar_long.pdf October 10, 2013.

⁶ Estimates derived from the 2011 American Community Survey published by the Migration Policy Institute. <http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/state.cfm?ID=AR> . Retrieved September 10, 2013.

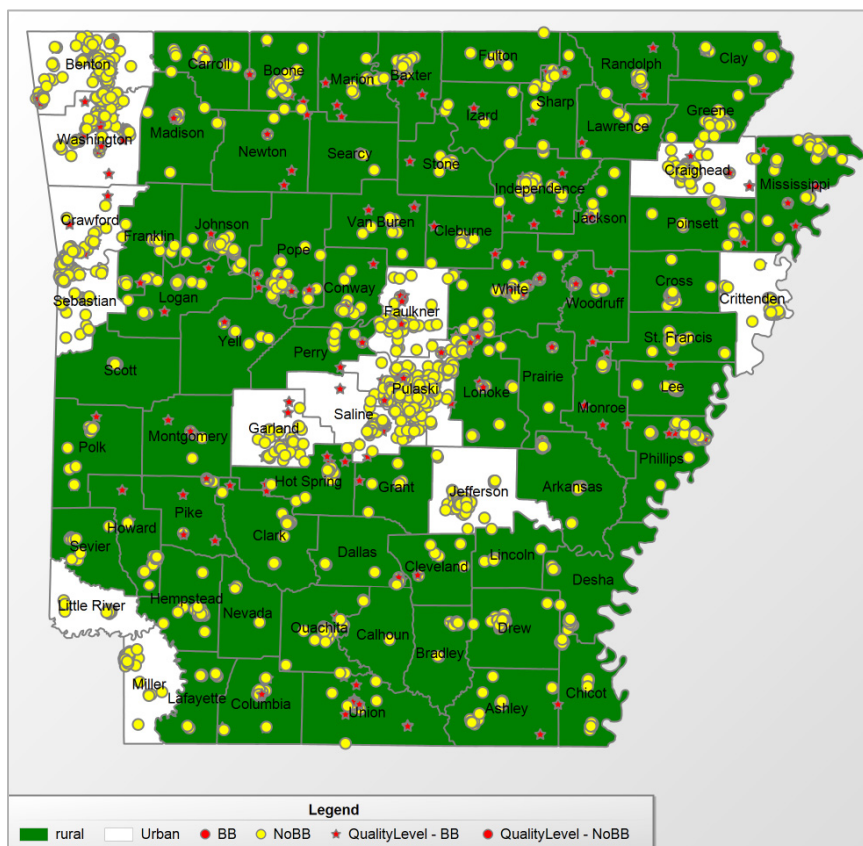
⁷ Appold, Stephen J., Randy Capps, Michael Fix, Ying Huang, Rafael A. Jimeno S., James H. Johnson, Jr., John D. Kasarda, and Kristen McCabe. 2013. *A Profile of Immigrants in Arkansas: Report Summary*. Little Rock, AR: Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

⁸ Arkansas Department of Education, *Programs for Language Minority Students 2012-2013*. (2013).

total, there are over 19,000 Arkansas children birth–5 whose families’ primary home language is something other than English.⁹ Among these families, Spanish (86.3 percent), Marshallese (5.5 percent), and Vietnamese (1.4 percent) are the primary languages spoken. Black children comprise 18 percent of the child population under 5.¹⁰ There are no federally recognized tribes in Arkansas, so no children in the state live on Indian lands.

Arkansas is a rural state, which creates a particularly complex set of service delivery challenges. Sixty-two of the state’s 75 counties meet the U.S. Census Bureau’s definition of “rural” and 44 percent of the population lives in nonmetropolitan counties. Figure A (1)-1 provides a visual representation in which counties shown in green are categorized as rural.

Figure A (1)-1. Arkansas Rural/Urban Map Showing ECE Facilities Locations



⁹This number is estimated based on the number of children entering Kindergarten as language minority students and the size of the birth-to-five population in state.

¹⁰Estimates derived from 2010 Census data, published by Kids Count Data Center.

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6384-population-under-5-by-race?loc=5&loct=2#detailed/2/any/false/133,38,35,18,11/2703,3,2701/13254,13255>. Retrieved September 9, 2013.

Of all children birth–5, 43.6 percent ($N = 85,070$) live in the rural areas. Of these children, 23.6 percent ($N = 20,108$) also are living in poverty.¹¹ These children face a number of additional risk factors that compound those typically associated with poverty, including the lack of access to healthful foods and health care, higher overweight and obesity rates, and the lack of high-quality early care and education options. As noted in a 2012 report from the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services, rural areas like those in Arkansas “face particular challenges...” when attempting to support and serve poor children. “Geographic and access-related challenges” place stress on social service providers and the children and families they serve.¹² Although nationally, poor children in rural areas often are referred to as the “forgotten poor,”¹³ these children are the focus of a number of innovative early childhood interventions in Arkansas, and are a high-needs population targeted specifically by this RTT–ELC proposal.

Arkansas’ Early Care and Education Delivery System

Like other states, Arkansas’ young children are being cared for and educated in a wide variety of early childhood settings. Roughly 71 percent of children birth–5 is in some form of early care and education program.

As discussed below, 11 percent of 3-year-olds with high needs and 37 percent of 4-year-olds with high needs are cared for in the state’s pre-kindergarten program. Arkansas also has a robust network of Head Start and Early Head Start grantees who promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services to enrolled children and families. There are 21 Head Start grantees in Arkansas serving 9,702 3- and 4-year-old children and their families in all 75 counties. There also are 10 Early Head Start grantees serving 800 children birth–3 and their families.

Arkansas has the largest Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) home visitation program in the country and is home to the national office of HIPPY USA. HIPPY is one of the country’s most widely implemented, evidence-based home visiting programs.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2005-2009, 5-year estimates: B17001

¹² National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services. December 2012. *Challenges to Head Start and Early Childhood Development Programs in Rural Communities*.

¹³ William, P. O’Hare. 2009. *The Forgotten Fifth: Child Poverty in Rural America*. Carsey Institute. University of New Hampshire.

Home visiting programs are an important part of the state’s early care and education system with nearly 5,500 children and their families being served by the state’s evidence-based home visiting programs. Given its largely rural makeup, Arkansas provides a home-based option for its pre-kindergarten program using the HIPPY and Parents as Teachers (PAT) home visiting models in addition to the programs funded through the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program. Approximately 4,165 children were served through the home-based option of the pre-kindergarten program. In addition, home visiting programs funded through MIECHV have enrolled an additional 1,331 since 2011 with the goal of serving over 2,275 families by 2015.

Finally, market-based child care arrangements—center-based and family child care homes—play a large role in providing early care and education for Arkansas children with high needs. These providers care for 22.9 percent of the state’s 3- and 4-year-old children and are the state’s primary child care arrangements for the state’s infants and toddlers. A little more than 17,000 Arkansas children receive child care vouchers; they are served by 1,366 of the state’s 2,572 licensed providers.¹⁴ Among children birth–5, the state provides child care subsidies to 8,192 3- and 4-year-old children and 9,196 children birth–3.

Market-based providers in Arkansas are typically small, caring for fewer than 85 children (centers) and 11 children (homes) on average. They operate as fragile businesses, deriving revenue from child care subsidies and parent fees that often do not support the level of quality necessary to promote strong child outcomes. The result is that this sector of the state’s early care and education system is of lower quality, on average.¹⁵ Equally important—because these providers are market-based—their businesses can be impacted negatively by regulatory efforts to improve quality. Arkansas takes the support of its child care sector seriously and understands that these providers first must be fiscally viable in order to provide high-quality care to children.

These demographic and programmatic statistics related to Arkansas’ young children and early care and education delivery system provide the context for the state’s early childhood system reform efforts. The state’s vision for reform is responsive to both the changing demographics of children with high needs, the large rural poor population, and the specific needs, strengths, and vulnerabilities of our early care and education providers. With the financial

¹⁴ These 1,366 represent about 53.1 percent of the 2,572 licensed providers in the state.

¹⁵ Section (B) provides the TQRIS levels Head Start, state pre-kindergarten, and child care providers. Child care providers are more likely to be in lower levels of the TQRIS compared to the other two programs.

resources already committed by the state (outlined in the next section) and Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge funds, the state will implement a high-quality, sustainable plan for impactful system reform.

Financial Investment

The belief in the unlimited potential of children has driven Arkansas' reform efforts and the high priority that the state places on funding for children. Despite being a poor state, Arkansas has one of the largest per-child state investments in early childhood in the country. The state makes a significant investment in funding for both infants and toddlers and preschool children with high needs. For infants and toddlers, in addition to funding the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) match to provide subsidy vouchers children younger than 3, the state funds a number of specific initiatives for very young children with high needs. The state funds a Happy Birthday Baby Book resource, which provides information on how new mothers can ensure the health, safety, and well-being of their child. The state also funds Reach Out and Read, a program that trains pediatricians to discuss the value of reading with parent and provides free children's books. In addition, the state allows up to \$10 million of state pre-kindergarten program funding to be used to provide care for infants and toddlers with high needs. Equally important, the state currently is rolling out a plan to contract for high-quality infant and toddler care using \$1 million in CCDF funding.

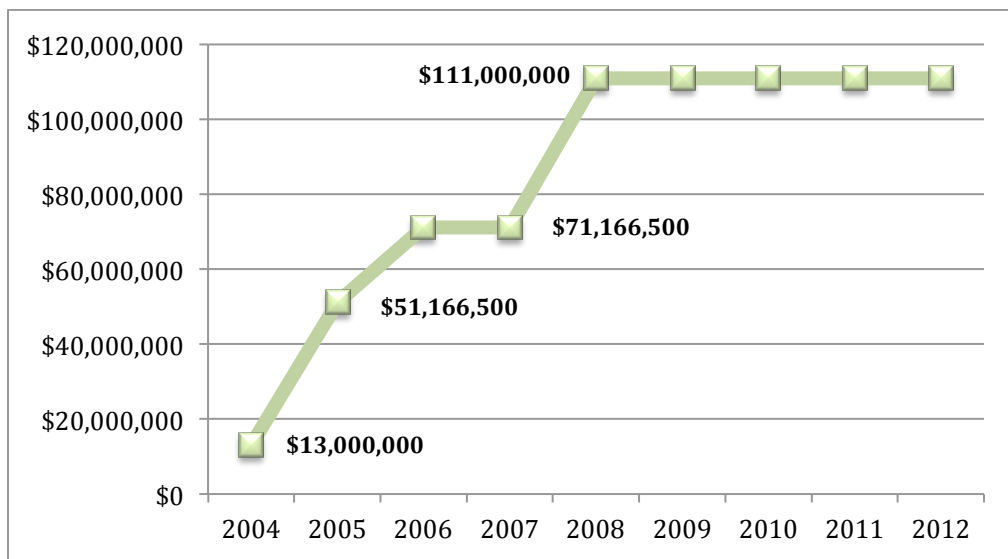
With regard to funding for 3-and 4 year olds, according to the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER), Arkansas ranks fifth among all states in the overall amount spent per child in a state pre-kindergarten program (\$8,753), ranking above Maryland, Oregon, North Carolina, Massachusetts, and other significantly wealthier states. Funded at \$111 million using state (\$103.5 million) and TANF funding (\$7.5 million), the Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) Program is a high-intensity, high-quality pre-kindergarten program offered for seven hours per day for the K–12 academic year and meets nine of the 10 pre-kindergarten quality benchmarks measured by NIEER.¹⁶ The program also requires a 40 percent match from local communities. The match can be cash or in-kind, which adds an additional \$44 million in local resources to the program. Figure A (1)-2 below displays the dramatic increase in state pre-kindergarten funding

¹⁶NIEER does not give Arkansas credit for requiring a BA because the Arkansas pre-kindergarten program only requires a degree in the first classroom and then in every 4th classroom of multi-classroom funded programs. While this is the requirement, more than 80% of teachers in the state pre-kindergarten program had a BA in 2012.

since 2004. In 2003, the Arkansas legislature passed Act 49, which significant expanded funding for the state’s pre-kindergarten program. This funding has increased over **850 percent** from \$13 million in 2004 to \$111 million in 2012.

In addition to this substantial commitment to the state pre-kindergarten program, the state contributes to IDEA Part B and the CCDF match. The state also offers a child care tax credit for families that enroll their children in high-quality early care and education programs (as measured by the states’ tiered quality rating and improvement system; TQRIS). The total state contribution to early childhood from the pre-kindergarten program, IDEA Part B, CCDF match, and Arkansas Child Care Credit Program is over \$133.6 million, not including the \$44 million in additional resources provided as part of the 40 percent pre-kindergarten match.

Figure A (1)-2. Funding for the Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) Pre-kindergarten Program (2004-2012)



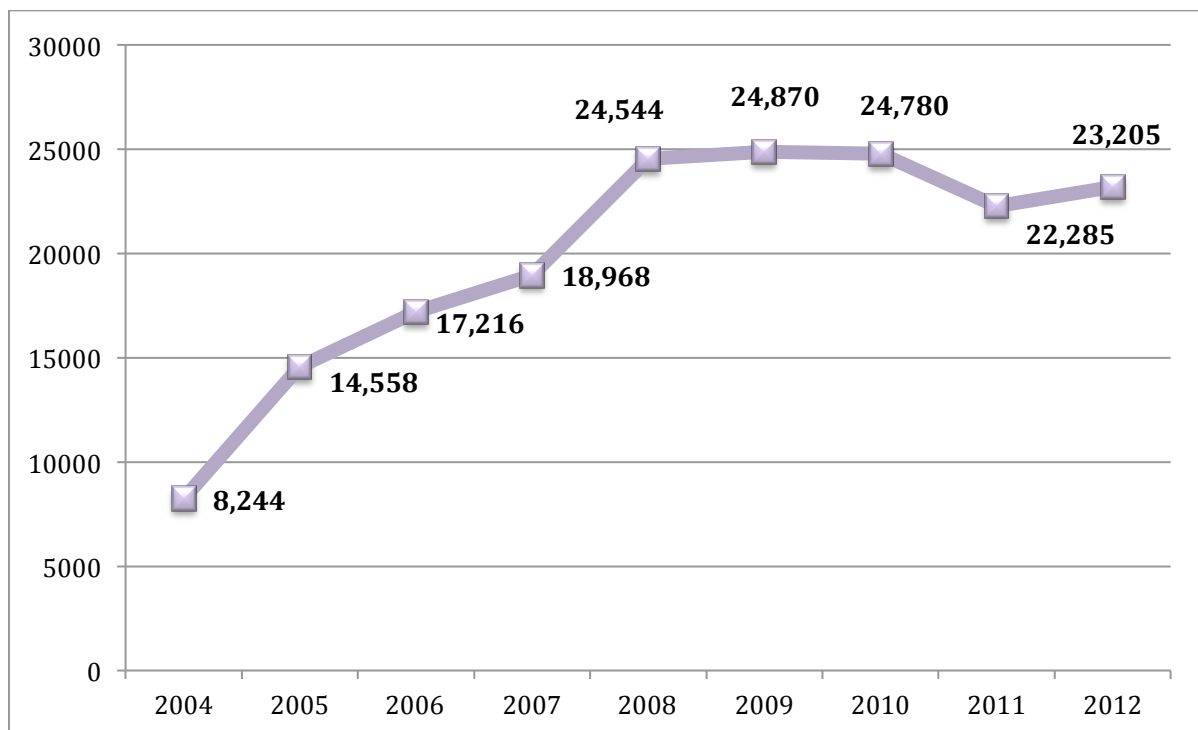
Equally important, throughout the downturn in the economy, the state remained steadfast and continued to prioritize early childhood funding. Arkansas increased its contribution to CCDF, and continued funding the pre-kindergarten program without cuts at a time when state funding for pre-kindergarten decreased nationally by \$548 million.¹⁷

¹⁷NIEER, State of Pre-kindergarten 2012.

a. Increasing, from January 2007 to present, the number of Children with High Needs in Early Learning and Development programs

With the dramatic increase in state funding since 2004 has come a corresponding increase in the number of children with high needs served in Arkansas' early care and education programs. When Act 49 was passed in 2003, which precipitated the steady increase in funding, a little over 8,200 children with high needs were being served. With the funding increase, the state now serves around 23,000 children in its pre-kindergarten program with some variation from year to year. Figure A (1)-3 charts the increase in participation of these children with high needs in the state pre-kindergarten program.¹⁸

Figure A (1)-3. Children Served in Arkansas ABC Pre-kindergarten (2004–2012)



According to NIEER, the state ranks 11th nationally in the percentage of 4-year-olds served in the pre-kindergarten program and fifth in the percentage of 3-year-olds served. Considering that Arkansas is one of the poorest states in the country, ranking 45th in per capita income, the state's

¹⁸ Changes in enrollment are a product of when the data were collected and not changes in enrollment capacity over the time period.

investments in infant and toddler care and pre-kindergarten, are nothing short of extraordinary. Indeed, between the federally funded Head Start and the Arkansas Better Chance pre-kindergarten programs, the state is serving about half of the eligible 3- and 4-year-old population living in poverty.

The state also is increasing the number of children with high needs in high-quality settings by increasing the quality of the state’s child care programs. The number of children in Quality Approval (QA) programs (those formally recognized as meeting substantially higher standards than the state’s licensing regulations and corresponding to the highest tier of Arkansas Better Beginnings, the state’s TQRIS) has increased from 1,500 children in 2008 to 7,200 in 2012. The state also continues to work to increase access to high-quality early learning programs for infants and toddlers, as evidenced by the \$1 million commitment in CCDF funding for contracted high-quality infant and toddler slots.

Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, and practices

Arkansas’ current system of early childhood education is the product of over 20 years of evolution and reform. The table below provides a timeline of the major legislation, policies and practices that have shaped the state’s current early care and education system.

Timeline of Key Events in the Evolution of Arkansas’ Early Care and Education System

Date	Legislation, Policies, and Practices
1988	The state begins implementation of Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), one the nation’s most widely used and successful evidence-based home visiting models.
1989	Arkansas’ Early Childhood Commission is established by Act 202 to facilitate coordination and communication of state agencies on early childhood issues. Currently, it consists of 18 members from all aspects of the early childhood system including state agencies, Head Start, practitioners, schools, the business community, and higher education. The Commission’s membership was expanded to meet the statutory requirements of Early Childhood State Advisory Councils (SAC) and became Arkansas’ SAC in 2010.

1991	The Arkansas Legislature passes Act 212 establishing a state pre-kindergarten program—Arkansas Better Chance (ABC)—at a funding level of \$10 million.
1993	Arkansas initiates the Quality Approval (QA) Initiative designed to identify and reward early childhood programs that meet substantially higher standards than the state’s licensing regulations. QA laid the groundwork for the state’s current TQRIS initiative—Arkansas Better Beginnings.
1993	<p>The Arkansas legislature passes Acts 820 and 1268 that provide tax incentives to child care providers and families using paid child care.</p> <p>Act 820 allows corporations that build and equip approved child care centers to be exempt from certain state taxes and provides tax incentives. Corporations can receive a 3.9 percent tax credit of the annual salary of staff employed exclusively in providing child care services for the corporation.</p> <p>Act 1268 provides an enhanced income tax credit in the amount of 20 percent of the federal child care credit to all qualified taxpayers who incur child care expenses at approved child care facilities.</p>
1997	The Arkansas Legislature passes Act 1132, which transferred a majority of early care and education functions to the new Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE) within the Department of Human Services (DHS; See A(3)).
2003	The Arkansas Legislature passes Act 49, significantly improving and expanding the ABC Program by making all 3- and 4-year-old children in families below 200 percent of poverty eligible. This began the rapid increase in state pre-kindergarten funding from 2004 to 2012.
2003	Arkansas receives an Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant to support the state’s work coordinating and creating better communication on issues related to early childhood. The grant supports four working groups—early care and education, family support and parent education, medical

	homes, and social–emotional health—that advise state policymakers and work to implement best practices on the ground.
2003	Arkansas Legislature passes Act 825 requiring the Arkansas Department of Education to determine and prepare a list of skills children need in order to be prepared for kindergarten entry. Act 1552 is also passed, requiring schools to assess for school readiness at kindergarten entry (See E (1)).
2005	Arkansas launches the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Pilot Project.
2007	Arkansas releases a study conducted by NIEER on the positive impact of the state’s ABC program.
2007	Arkansas initiates the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC) Initiative. This partnership between DCCECE and the Arkansas Department of Health evaluates and provides technical assistance to child care providers in the areas of nutrition and physical activity policies. The family component of the program gives parents healthy alternative food ideas, promotes awareness, and encourages an active lifestyle at home. All regional Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies have a trained NAP SACC consultant.
2008	Through a grant from the Institute of Education Sciences, Arkansas begins development of its State Longitudinal Data System, which includes data from the state’s pre-kindergarten program.
2010	Arkansas begins initial implementation of Arkansas Better Beginnings (AR–BB), the state’s Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.
2011	The Arkansas Home Visiting Network (AHVN) is created as part of Arkansas Children’s Hospital (ACH) to address the poor outcomes for low-income and medically fragile children. The network manages the two federal MIECHV grants awarded to Arkansas in a unique public/private partnership

	contract between the Arkansas Department of Health and ACH. AHVN works to develop, expand, and evaluate home visiting services in the state with a goal of serving 2,275 more families. It currently works in Arkansas with four evidence-based models and one promising program.
2013	University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) releases evaluation results on AR-BB and provides recommendations for improvement. These recommendations are being used in the TQRIS project as part of this application.
2013	The Arkansas Legislature passes Act 1326 establishing the Whole Child–Whole Community Program, which forms a working group to help recognize those communities that create pathways and opportunities to “spur systemic cooperation, collaboration, and coordination within and beyond schoolhouse doors and promote a shift from the narrowly defined student achievement and traditional education reform to broader, more comprehensive efforts...”

b. Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high-quality early learning and development system

Arkansas has a strong, unified governance structure; is implementing each component of a high-quality early care and education system; and recently has made some dramatic improvements to its early learning and development system.

Streamlined, Coordinated Early Childhood Governance Structure

Discussed in the table above and in greater detail in Section A (3), Arkansas has consolidated most early childhood functions under the Division of Child Care and Early Child Education (DCCEC), and has strong working relationships with its partner agencies in the Departments of Health, Education, Higher Education, and Children and Families, as well as the Head Start State Collaboration Office.

New Child Care Licensing Regulations

Prior to 2013, Arkansas’ child care licensing regulations and oversight could best be described as a study in contradictions. According to “We Can Do Better,” a report published by Child Care Aware that ranks state child care regulations and oversight, Arkansas ranked 49th in

the quality of its program standards, but first in the oversight of those standards.¹⁹ Since the publication of that report, the state has revised its program standards significantly, improving regulations related to group size, staff–child ratios, director and staff qualifications and training, background checks, safety practices, and facilities. Arkansas’ new regulations also place a strong emphasis on research-based practices such as supporting positive teacher–child interactions; promoting learning and development across domains; emphasizing individualization, small groups, and a balance of structured and child-directed activities; fostering family engagement; and promoting relationship-based practices for infant and toddler care. The regulations operationalize these constructs and provide meaningful guidance for programs to carry out these critical aspects of early care and education. Approved by the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission and scheduled for implementation in 2014, these stronger standards—which will be incorporated into the state’s TQRIS—coupled with the already robust monitoring system will improve significantly the quality of child care settings for children with high needs. Appendix A-1.1 includes the new licensing regulations.

High-Quality State-Funded Pre-kindergarten Program— Arkansas Better Chance

As discussed, Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) is Arkansas’ state pre-kindergarten program. It is an intensive high-quality program administered by the DCCECE through a contract with the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE). ABC classrooms are housed within a variety of programs including school districts, Head Start, private child care, and family child care facilities. Of the 418 programs, 239 are located in rural counties.

Fully Implemented Early Learning and Development Standards

Arkansas is a pioneer and leader in developing and implementing high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards (discussed in Section C (1)). Currently, the state has fully implemented infant and toddler and 3- and 4-year-old Early Learning and Development Standards that provide expectations for what children should know and be able to do at different ages of early childhood. The standards are published in two documents, the “Arkansas Early Childhood Education Framework Handbook” (Appendix A-1.2) and the “Arkansas Framework for Infant and Toddler Care” (Appendix A-1.3). The standards are developmentally appropriate, horizontally and vertically aligned, and provide the conceptual foundation of the state’s early

¹⁹Child Care Aware of America. *We Can Do Better: Child Care Aware of America’s Ranking of State Child Care Center Regulations and Oversight. 2013.*

care and education system. The standards for 3- and 4-year-olds have been revised recently. State-funded professional development is directed to align with and support the implementation of the Early Learning and Development Standards. The state is proposing through this RTT–ELC grant to use these standards as the foundation for the development of a “best in class” set of birth–5 early learning standards to be used by all early learning programs in the state (Project 3).

A Fully Implemented Statewide TQRIS

Arkansas has been systematically assessing, rewarding, publicizing, and improving quality at the program and provider level since 1993 with the creation of the Quality Approval (QA) system. In 2010, based on the lessons learned from the QA system the state implemented a three-tiered TQRIS call Arkansas Better Beginnings (AR–BB). The TQRIS focuses on five components of program quality: 1) administration, 2) qualifications and professional development, 3) learning environment, 4) environmental assessment, and 5) child health and development. Explained in detail in Section (B), Arkansas Better Beginnings recently was evaluated by the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences (UAMS). The evaluation findings provide a foundation for significant, strategic improvements to the TQRIS proposed as part of this grant (Project 2).

Comprehensive Assessment System

Arkansas has implemented each element of a Comprehensive Assessment System, described in detail below and in more depth in section (C)(2).

Screening. All children in the Arkansas Better Chance pre-kindergarten program and the state’s Head Start and Early Head Start programs receive or are required to have a vision, hearing, dental (Head Start only) and developmental screening. In the pre-kindergarten program, local programs choose among seven screening tools approved by the state for their ease of use and psychometric properties. Head Start programs follow federal Head Start performance standards related to screening. In 2012, the state conducted a pilot where child care providers at 66 facilities across 22 counties were trained on the *Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition* (J. Squires & Bricker, 2009) and the *Ages & Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional* (J. Squires, Bricker, Twombly, & Squires, 2005). The pilot demonstrated the feasibility of widespread implementation of screening in the state’s child care programs, and these findings are used in Project 4 of this grant to expand screening to all Arkansas providers receiving child care vouchers.

Formative Assessment. Similar to screening, formative assessments are used in the Arkansas Better Chance pre-kindergarten program and the state’s Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The pre-kindergarten program uses the *Ounce Scale* (for children birth–3) and the *Work Sampling System* (for 3- and 4-year-olds). Early Head Start and Head Start follow the federal Head Start performance standards and can choose their own assessment instrument. A majority of the state’s Head Start programs use *The Work Sampling System* and the *Ounce Scale*, as well as *Teaching Strategies GOLD* formative assessments. Project 4 under this grant also will expand the use of formative assessment to all providers receiving child care vouchers in the state.

Environmental Quality. All state pre-kindergarten classrooms are required to use the Environment Rating Scales (ERS; i.e., *ITERS*, *ECERS*, *SACERS*, *FCCERS*) in order to ensure that “the curriculum model and the actual classroom practice...is developmentally appropriate.”²⁰ In addition, the ERS is a key component of the AR–BB TQRIS.

Adult–Child Interactions. Although the ERS does have one scale measuring adult–child interactions, the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System*(*CLASS*; Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008)—which has a strong focus on the quality of adult–child interactions—currently is utilized in Head Start to measure this construct. Project 4 will expand the use of *CLASS* (both the preschool and infant and toddler instruments) for programs wishing to reach the highest tiers of the state’s TQRIS.

Health Promotion

Arkansas has heavily invested in health-related initiatives for young children, particularly in the areas of obesity prevention and health promotion practices in early learning environments. While Appendix A-1.4 provides a brief description of health related system improvements that affect the lives of children with high needs ages birth–5, below are specific initiatives upon which the RTT–ELC will build.

The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Center on Distance Health is implementing a state-wide telehealth initiative in rural areas. The Center was recently awarded \$102 million grant by the National Telecommunications Information Administration within the U.S. Department of Commerce to support a statewide \$128-million broadband infrastructure that will provide telehealth services to community institutions across Arkansas. RTT–ELC funding will be used to pilot and evaluate an initiative to use a telehealth model to provide referral

²⁰ Section 13.04, *Rules Governing the Arkansas Better Chance Program*.

services for children in rural areas who are screened as having a potential developmental delay, as well as to provide mental health supports for families with children with high needs.

Arkansas supports use of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC) across the state. NAP SACC uses an organizational self-assessment tool to measure the strengths and limitations of a child care facility's nutrition and physical activity policy, practices, and environments. A health consultant then works with the child care facility staff to set goals for change and develop plans for follow-up actions to improve practice. Professional development training then is provided to the facility staff on the topics of: 1) childhood obesity, 2) nutrition for young children, 3) physical activity for young children, 4) personal health and wellness for staff, and, 5) working with families to promote healthy weight behaviors.

Family Engagement Strategies

Arkansas has several initiatives to strengthen families' capacity to support their children (see Table (A)(1)-9). The state's pre-kindergarten program has specific requirements related to family engagement, including detailed parent involvement plans. The state's current TQRIS has a progression of standards related to family engagement that include activities related to the Strengthening Families Initiative. Additional efforts in which the state has focused investment—such as the TIPS for Great Kids Project and related trainings, the support for using the FamilyMap inventories, and the development of the Family Connection materials (described in Section C4)—all demonstrate key successes and the collaborative environment among stakeholders. Other important family engagement aspects include family engagement competencies for educators; home visitation programs; and trainings to enhance cultural competency, support for dual language learners, and inclusion of children with disabilities.

In addition, “Guiding Children Successfully” (GCS) is a new series for parents and child care providers produced by the Arkansas Educational Telecommunications Network (AETN)—in partnership with the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service—that addresses topics ranging from motivating children to teaching them responsibility.

Early Childhood Educator Workforce Policies

Arkansas' professional development for the early care and education workforce is designed to lift the quality of programs across the state and specifically helps programs achieve requirements for AR–BB TQRIS. The vision for this system is articulated in Arkansas'

professional and career development document for early care and education: “Key Content Areas and Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals”(see Appendix A-1.5). All early care and education staff in Arkansas can attend free and low-cost professional development courses and workshops (see Appendix A-1.6 for a list of state-provided trainings and professional development opportunities). A coordinated system of professional development, the Traveling Arkansas’ Professional Pathways (TAPP), has been established to provide training and guidance to early childhood professionals. The TAPP Registry is the tracking component of professional development. Members can view transcripts of trainings they have attended, and view and register for trainings online. Registration in TAPP is required for educators in AR–BB TQRIS and ABC Programs.

Kindergarten Entry Assessment

Arkansas has a fully implemented statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment—or KEA—that has been collecting and reporting data since 2004. Currently, the state uses the *Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI)* as the state’s KEA instrument. The *QELI* is an observation-based assessment tool that measures school readiness across six key elements: general knowledge; oral communication; written language; math concepts; work habits; and attentive behavior. The guidelines for use of the *QELI* adhere to the National Academy of Sciences guidelines for appropriate assessment. The instrument has acceptable psychometric properties and includes numerous supports to promote inter-rater reliability. The data generated from the KEA provides powerful information that is used by the legislature, administrative agencies, and individual programs. These data also are used to support the rationale for system changes as part of this grant (see Section (A)(2)). RTT–ELC funds will be used to select a new assessment tool that addresses all of the essential domains of school readiness with stronger psychometric properties and one that will be more appropriate for assessing children who are English Language Learners and children with special needs.

Effective Data Practices

All data related to the state’s KEA system is included in the State Longitudinal Data System, which has exceptional reporting capabilities. Discussed in detail in Section (E)(1), the Arkansas Research Center has developed a “Quick Looks” system that allows any interested party the opportunity to look at aggregated *QELI* results by year and program for different categories of children (high-needs, high-needs not exposed to state pre-kindergarten, etc.)

In addition, since 2005, DCCECE has maintained the Division Support System—or DSS, a division-wide data warehouse—that contains data pertaining to child care eligibility, child care billing, special nutrition, licensing, exclusions, recoupments, universal client directory, and state payments. Personal and facility information from these systems are used to create a unique identifier for a unique person and a unique facility/vendor. Reporting, scorecards, and dashboards can be created from the warehouse.

The state is in the process of migrating all of the DSS data to a recently created Department of Human Services (DHS) agency-wide data warehouse, the Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW). This data system will contain all of the data from the DSS system as well as data from foster care/adoptions, youth services (juveniles services), statewide eligibility for SNAP and Medicaid services, Medicaid claims, grant and awards, payments, cost allocation, staff management, youth outcomes, and SNAP EBT transactions. All reporting and the creation of dashboards will occur from the EDW system.

Finally, Arkansas was selected by the Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy—pronounced “*daisy*”) as a Framework Partner state. DaSy will be working closely with these states to develop a framework that identifies the key components and quality indicators of an effective early childhood data system. Specifically, the project will focus on:

1. Key aspects of effective early childhood data systems for Part C and 619
2. A self-assessment of their data systems and identifying areas for improvement
3. Identifying strategies for coordination across systems

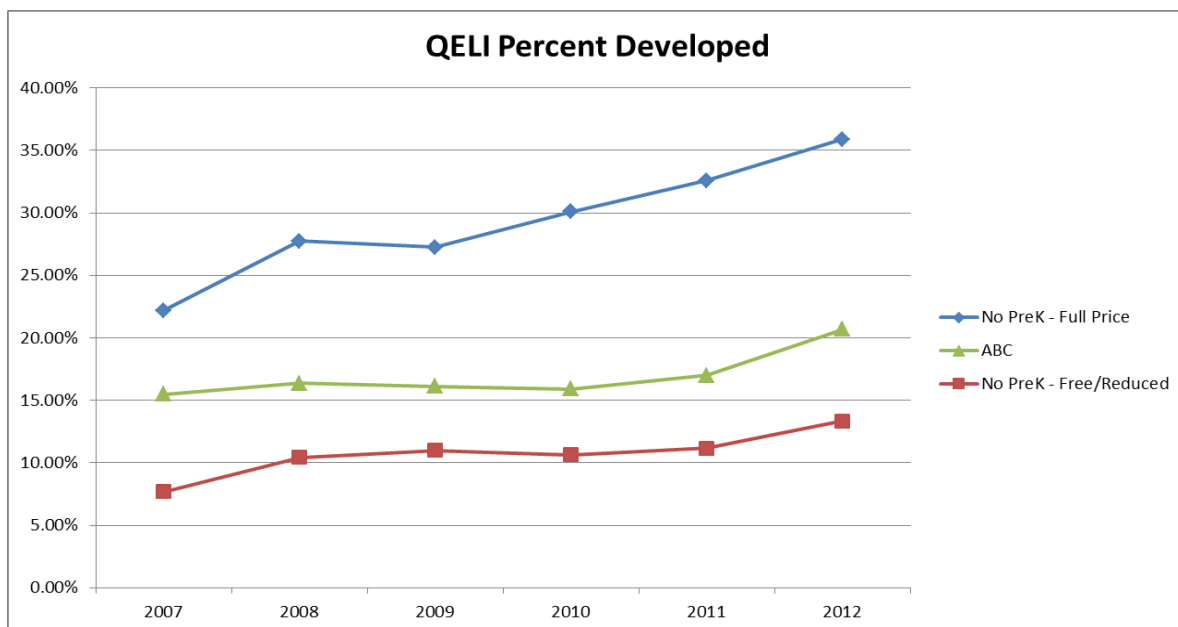
(A)(2) Articulating the State’s rationale

The ultimate goal of the reform agenda outlined in this proposal is to ensure the school readiness of all Arkansas children upon entering kindergarten, regardless of the early care and education setting from which the child arrives. As noted, Arkansas has a fully implemented KEA system that has been measuring school readiness in the state since 2004 and allows the state to take a data-driven approach to systems reform in order to improve school readiness.

Arkansas’ KEA measures school readiness by assessing the percentage of children who are “not developed,” “developing,” or “developed” in six different areas of development and learning. Since every child in the state is assessed at kindergarten entry and demographic and programmatic information also is collected, the state can compare the school readiness of different populations of children at kindergarten entry. Figure A(1)-4 below provides a comparison of school readiness rates for three groups of children over the last four years: (1)

low-income children who attended the ABC Program prior to kindergarten; (2) low-income children who did not attend the ABC Program prior to kindergarten; and, (3) children who are not identified as low-income.

Figure A(1)-4. Percent of Children Rated at the “Developed” Level on the QELI (2007–2012)



The story told by this figure is clear—the ABC Program improves outcomes for children relative to similar children not in the program, but school readiness gaps with higher-income children remain. Regardless of the developmental area analyzed, a greater percentage of low-income children in the ABC Program receive a score of “developed” on all items compared to similar children with high needs not exposed to the program. At the same time, children in the pre-kindergarten program score lower than their higher-income peers. As such, the state can conclude (and independent research confirms) that the pre-kindergarten program has a profound effect on enrolled children, but more needs to be done to close the gap with higher income children.²¹

These findings from the state’s KEA provide a clear rationale for the reforms outlined in this proposal. Clearly, RTT–ELC reforms must first work to improve the outcomes of children who are in child care settings and have no exposure to the state’s pre-kindergarten program.

²¹ Clive R. Belifield. November 2006. *An Economic Analysis of Pre-K in Arkansas*. The National Institute for Early Education Research.

Second, the state must continue to make the high-quality ABC Program even better. In both cases, a strong emphasis on improving the experiences of the state's infants and toddlers, in particular, will help provide a strong foundation for children as they move into the preschool year.

Table (A)(1)-1: Children from Low-Income²² families, by age		
	Number of children from Low-Income families in the State	Children from Low-Income families as a percentage of all children in the State
Infants under age 1	22,815	60%
Toddlers ages 1 through 2	46,372	60%
Preschoolers ages 3 to kindergarten entry	68,943	57%
Total number of children, birth to kindergarten entry, from low-income families	139,396	59%
<p>The total number of children includes ages birth through age five. Data were calculated from the 2009–2011 American Community Survey, representing information from the years 2009 to 2011 and the National Center for Child Poverty. http://www.nccp.org/tools Retrieved October 10, 2013.</p> <p>Although infant/toddler data was only available as an aggregated estimate of the percentage low-income children under age three, specific numbers for the age ranges of >1 and 1–2 were extrapolated using the total number of children in these age ranges derived from 2011 Census data, published by Kids Count Data Center. http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#AR/2/0 Retrieved October 10, 2013.</p>		

Table (A)(1)-2: Special populations of Children with High Needs		
<p><i>The State should use these data to guide its thinking about where specific activities may be required to address special populations' unique needs. The State will describe such activities throughout its application.</i></p>		
Special populations: Children who . . .	Number of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...	Percentage of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...
Have disabilities or developmental delays²³	16,415	7%
Are English learners²⁴	24,808	10%
Reside on “Indian Lands”	N/A	N/A
Are migrant²⁵	1,476*	0.06%*
Are homeless²⁶	7,918	3%

²²Low-Income is defined as having an income of up to 200% of the Federal poverty rate.

²³For purposes of this application, children with disabilities or developmental delays are defined as children birth through kindergarten entry that have an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

²⁴For purposes of this application, children who are English learners are children birth through kindergarten entry who have home languages other than English.

²⁵For purposes of this application, children who are migrant are children birth through kindergarten entry who meet the definition of “migratory child” in ESEA section 1309(2).

²⁶ The term “homeless children” has the meaning given the term “homeless children and youths” in section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2)).

Table (A)(1)-2: Special populations of Children with High Needs

The State should use these data to guide its thinking about where specific activities may be required to address special populations' unique needs. The State will describe such activities throughout its application.

Special populations: Children who . . .	Number of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...	Percentage of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...
Are in foster care	1,553	0.06%
Other as identified by the State <i>Live in rural areas</i>	103,011	44%

Data regarding children with developmental delays or disabilities was derived from TA&D Network (2012). [Parts B & C Child Count Data 2011]. Historical State-Level IDEA Data Files. Retrieved from: <http://tadnet.public.tandem.org/pages/712> October 5, 2013;

Data pertaining to children who are English learners is based on the number of children entering kindergarten as Limited English Proficient (LEP) in 2011–2012 and was extrapolated based on the size of the birth-to-five population in the state. Data regarding children entering kindergarten as LEP was obtained from Arkansas Department of Education (2012) *Programs for Language Minority Students*. ADE: Little Rock.

Regarding children living on Indian lands, there are no federally recognized tribes in Arkansas, so no children in the state live on Indian lands.

*Data pertaining to migrant children was derived from OMB Report No. 1810-0614. This report details migrant children birth through five served under Title 1 Part C for the reporting period of September 1, 2011–August 31, 2012. Given that these data represent only those served under Title I and given that some migrant children may not be enrolled in a formal education program, it is highly likely that these data significantly underestimate the true migrant population of children birth to five in the state.

Data regarding homeless children was obtained from The National Center on Family Homelessness (2008). Arkansas- America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness. Retrieved from: http://www.homelesschildrenamerica.org/pdf/report_cards/long/ar_long.pdf October 10, 2013.

Data concerning children in foster care was retrieved from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). [Arkansas Indicators of Foster Care by Age 2011 Data] Kids Count Data Center. Retrieved from <http://www.kidscount.org/datacenter> Retrieved October 10, 2013.

Data pertaining to the number of children living in rural areas (defined by the U.S. Census as a county with less than 20,000 persons) was obtained from U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2005-2009, 5-year estimates: B17001.

The estimate of Arkansas' total birth through five population used to calculate percentages was derived from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). [Arkansas Indicators by Age 2011 Data] Kids Count Data Center. Retrieved from <http://www.kidscount.org/datacenter> Retrieved October 5, 2013.

Table (A)(1)-3: Participation of Children with High Needs in different types of Early Learning and Development Programs, by age

Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.

Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program, by age			
	Infants under age 1	Toddlers ages 1 through 2	Preschoolers ages 3 until kindergarten entry	Total
State-funded preschool <i>Specify:</i> Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) Programs <i>Data Source and Year:</i> Child Outcome, Planning, and Assessment (COPA), 2012–2013 school year	92	902	23,300	24,294
Early Head Start and Head Start²⁷ <i>Data Source and Year:</i> Head Start Program Information Report 2011–2012	562	1,329	10,034	11,925
Programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 <i>Data Source and Year:</i> TA&D Network (2012). [Parts B & C Child Count Data 2011]. Historical State-Level IDEA Data Files. 2011 Data.	382	2,748	10,331	13,461
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA <i>Data Source and Year:</i> OMB Report No. 1810-0614, data from 2011–2012.	0	0	7,356	7,356
Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program <i>Data Source and Year:</i> <i>KidCare 2012-13</i>	4,329	5,287	4,010	13,626

²⁷ Including children participating in Migrant Head Start Programs and Tribal Head Start Programs.

Table (A)(1)-3: Participation of Children with High Needs in different types of Early Learning and Development Programs, by age

Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.

Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program, by age			
	Infants under age 1	Toddlers ages 1 through 2	Preschoolers ages 3 until kindergarten entry	Total
Other <i>Specify:</i> ABC-Funded Home Visiting Programs <i>Data Source and Year:</i> Child Outcome, Planning, and Assessment (COPA), 2012–2013 school year	N/A	N/A	4,165	4,165
Other <i>Specify:</i> MIECHV Funded Programs <i>Data Source and Year:</i> Arkansas Home Visiting Network; data as of September 1, 2013.	436	176	560	1,122
<i>Add additional rows as needed.</i>				

Table (A)(1)-3b: Participation of Children in Early Learning and Development Programs in the State, by Race/Ethnicity							
Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.							
Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of Hispanic children	Number of Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Asian Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Black or African American Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Children of Two or more races	Number of Non-Hispanic White Children
State-funded preschool <i>Specify:</i> ABC Program <i>Source and year:</i> Reported in COPA as of 9/23/13	3,251	121	198	6,139	39	564	10,982
Early Head Start and Head Start ²⁸	1,805	23	50	5,301	40	705	4,581
Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part C	231	12	0	1,166	0	49	1,673
Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619	1,151	33	90	3,685	23	294	7,999
Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7,356
Early Learning and Development	769	88	57	9,294	35	421	6,995

²⁸ Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program							
Other <i>Describe:</i>							

Table (A)(1)-4: Historical data on funding for Early Learning and Development					
Type of investment	Funding for each of the Past 5 Fiscal Years				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Supplemental State spending on Early Head Start and Head Start²⁹	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
State-funded preschool <i>Specify: ABC Program</i>	103,500,000	103,500,00	103,500,000	103,500,000	103,500,000
State contributions to IDEA Part C	0	0	0	0	0
State contributions for special education and related services for children with disabilities, ages 3 through kindergarten entry	15,316,744	15,623,079	15,623,079	15,623,079	15,623,079
Total State contributions to CCDF³⁰	6,143,662	6,114,638	6,114,638	6,261,998	6,983,254
State match to CCDF <i>Exceeded/Met/Not Met (if exceeded, indicate amount by which match was exceeded)</i>	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met

²⁹ Including children participating in Migrant Head Start Programs and Tribal Head Start Programs.

³⁰ Total State contributions to CCDF must include Maintenance of Effort (MOE), State Match, and any State contributions exceeding State MOE or Match.

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

TANF spending on Early Learning and Development Programs³¹	12,500,000	14,191,000	11,500,000	7,500,000	7,500,000
Other State contributions <i>Specify:</i> Arkansas Child Care Credit Program (tax credit for families enrolling their child in AR–BB Level 2 or 3 program; began in 2010) *The 2012 number will continue to increase as credit refunds are processed. **2013 data are not yet available <i>Source:</i> Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration	N/A	105,627	137,110	127,584*	N/A**
Other State contributions <i>Specify:</i>					
Total State contributions:	137,460,406	139,534,344	136,874,827	133,012,661*	133,606,333*
*These numbers will continue to increase as Arkansas Child Care Credit Program tax credits are issued for families enrolling in high-quality care					

³¹Include TANF transfers to CCDF as well as direct TANF spending on Early Learning and Development Programs.

Table (A)(1)-5: Historical data on the participation of Children with High Needs in Early Learning and Development Programs in the State					
<i>Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.</i>					
Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Total number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program for each of the past 5 years³²				
	2009	2010	2011³³	2012¹⁷	2013¹⁷
State-funded preschool <i>(annual census count; e.g., October 1 count)</i> <i>Specify:</i>	24,870	24,780	22,285	23,205 as of 4/05/12	22,958 as of 11/05/12
Early Head Start and Head Start³⁴ <i>(funded enrollment)</i>	10,921	11,318	11,595	11,057	10,253
619 <i>(annual November 1 count)</i>	2,720	3,222	3,140	3,130	Not yet reported
Programs and services funded by Part B, section 619 <i>(annual December 1 count)</i>	9,676	10,212	10,521	10,776	10,231
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA <i>(total number of children who receive Title I services annually, as reported in the Consolidated State Performance Report)</i>	862	987	987	987	987
Programs receiving CCDF funds <i>(average monthly served)</i>	9,589	15,490	10,197	8,625	8,217
Other <i>Describe:</i>					

³² Include all Children with High Needs served with both Federal dollars and State supplemental dollars.

³³ Note to Reviewers: The number of children served reflects a mix of Federal, State, and local spending. Head Start, IDEA, and CCDF all received additional Federal funding under the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which may be reflected in increased numbers of children served in 2009-2011.

³⁴ Including children participating in Migrant Head Start Programs and Tribal Head Start Programs.

Table (A)(1)-6 : Current status of the State’s Early Learning and Development Standards

Please place an “X” in the boxes to indicate where the State’s Early Learning and Development Standards address the different age groups by Essential Domain of School Readiness

Essential Domains of School Readiness	Age Groups		
	Infants	Toddlers	Preschoolers
Language and literacy development	X	X	X
Cognition and general knowledge (including early math and early scientific development)	X	X	X
Approaches toward learning	X	X	X
Physical well-being and motor development	X	X	X
Social and emotional development	X	X	X
<p><i>[The Arkansas Early Childhood Education (AECE) Framework Handbook for Three and Four Year Old Children, which includes the Arkansas Early Learning and Development Standards, was revised in 2013. The revisions were brought about by the changes in the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework and Arkansas’ adoption of the K– 12 Common Core State Standards. The strength of the AECE Framework Handbook for Three- and Four-Year-Old Children is its relationship to these other measurements.</i></p> <p><i>A developmental rating scale was added to the Arkansas Framework for Infant and Toddler Care. The infant and toddler benchmarks offer the necessary continuum to the AECE Framework Handbook for Three and Four year Old Children.]</i></p>			

Table (A)(1)-7: Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System currently required within the State

Please place an “X” in the boxes to indicate where an element of a Comprehensive Assessment System is currently required.

Types of programs or systems	Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System				
	Screening Measures	Formative Assessments	Measures of Environmental Quality	Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions	Other
State-funded preschool <i>Specify: ABC Program</i>	X	X	X	X	
Early Head Start and Head Start ³⁵	X	X	X	X	
Programs funded under IDEA Part C	X	X			

³⁵ Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

Table (A)(1)-7: Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System currently required within the State					
<i>Please place an "X" in the boxes to indicate where an element of a Comprehensive Assessment System is currently required.</i>					
Types of programs or systems	Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System				
	Screening Measures	Formative Assessments	Measures of Environmental Quality	Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions	Other
Programs funded under IDEA Part B, section 619	X	X			
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	X	X	X	X	
Programs receiving CCDF funds	X				
Current Quality Rating and Improvement System requirements <i>Specify by tier (add rows if needed):</i>	X Measured in PAS/BAS Assessment Level 2- PAS/BAS assessment required, no score required Level 3- PAS/BAS assessment minimum 4.00 (items 1-21; items 5-6 not included in average)	X Measured in PAS/BAS Assessment Level 2- PAS/BAS assessment required, no score required Level 3- PAS/BAS assessment minimum 4.00 (items 1-21; items 5-6 not included in average)	X Level 1- ERS or YPQA self-assessment or Technical Assistance Level 2- ERS/YPQA assessment minimum 3.00 Level 3- ERS minimum 4.00; YPQA minimum 3.75	X Level 2- Measured in ERS/YPQA assessment 3.00 minimum Level 3- Measured in ERS assessment 4.00 minimum; YPQA 3.75 minimum	
State licensing requirements					
Other <i>Describe:</i>					
Environmental quality and quality of adult – child interactions are measured using the <i>Environment Rating Scales</i>					
The screening required by CCDF programs is the Early and Periodic Screening and Diagnostic Treatment (EPSDT) administered within a well-child check-up and is required through the Child Care Authorization Agreement (CCAA)					
Assessment requirements for ABC programs are delineated in the <i>Arkansas Department of Education</i>					

Table (A)(1)-8: Elements of high-quality health promotion practices currently required within the State

Please place an "X" in the boxes to indicate where the elements of high-quality health promotion practices are currently required.

Types of Programs or Systems	Elements of high-quality health promotion practices				
	Health and safety requirements	Developmental, behavioral, and sensory screening, referral, and follow-up	Health promotion, including physical activity and healthy eating habits	Health literacy	Other
State-funded preschool <i>Specify: ABC Program</i>	X	X	X		
Early Head Start and Head Start	X	X	X		
Programs funded under IDEA Part C		X	X		
Programs funded under IDEA Part B, section 619	X	X			
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	X	X	X		
Programs receiving CCDF funds					
Current Quality Rating and Improvement System requirements <i>Specify by tier (add rows if needed):</i>	X Level 1- Medical and educational plans for children are implemented and documented	X Level 1- Administrator receives training on physical activity for children Level 2- Physical activities for children required in daily plans. Administrator/kitchen manager receive annual training on nutrition for children	X Level 1- Information on child development & health shared with families Level 2- Information on medical homes for children shared with families Information on stages of development shared with families	X Level 1- ARKids First information given to families of uninsured children	X Level 1- Medical and educational plans for children are implemented and documented

Table (A)(1)-8: Elements of high-quality health promotion practices currently required within the State

Please place an "X" in the boxes to indicate where the elements of high-quality health promotion practices are currently required.

Types of Programs or Systems	Elements of high-quality health promotion practices				
	Health and safety requirements	Developmental, behavioral, and sensory screening, referral, and follow-up	Health promotion, including physical activity and healthy eating habits	Health literacy	Other
			Level 3- Information on nutrition & physical activity for children shared with families		
State licensing requirements	X	X	X		
Other <i>Describe:</i>					

Table (A)(1)-9: Elements of a high-quality family engagement strategy currently required within the State

Please describe the types of high-quality family engagement strategies required in the State. Types of strategies may, for example, include parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent education in child development, outreach to fathers and other family members, training and support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten, social networks of support, intergenerational activities, linkages with community supports and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making, and parent leadership development.

Types of Programs or Systems	Describe Family Engagement Strategies Required Today
State-funded preschool <i>Specify: ABC</i>	Each state-funded pre-K program is required to have a plan for parent involvement which includes opportunities for parental input into program operation and design. Parent involvement plans must include a mechanism for parental advice and review of programmatic plans, parent conferences, and a method to involve the parent in the child's educational experience including the encouragement of participation in classroom activities. In addition, each program must develop a community involvement plan that includes a description of how cooperation with other service providers concerned with the education, welfare, health and safety needs of young children will be established and maintained. Programs are encouraged to provide opportunities for community representatives to participate in the educational activities of the classroom.
Early Head Start and Head Start	Head Start /EHS uses the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework which demonstrates that when parent and family engagement activities are systemic and integrated across program foundations and program impact areas, family engagement outcomes are achieved. PFCE in Head Start and EHS is about building relationships with families that support family well-being; supporting strong relationships between parents and their children; and nurturing ongoing learning and development for both parents and children.
Programs funded under IDEA Part C	Early Intervention programs provide family training and referrals for services families need to assist them in meeting the family needs and reaching their personal goals.
Programs funded under IDEA Part B, section 619	Parents are involved with the identification, evaluation and development of their child's Individual Education Program Plan. Parents are provided training and information on their child's disability and EC Special Education Staff are in communication with parents on a regular on-going basis.
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	Programs differ but all are required to include activities to involve parent participation. Homeless programs activate are more in the position to help families find services needed. Even start requires parents to attend literacy interactive training.
Programs receiving CCDF funds	DCCECE requires CCDF Provider Participants to allow parents unlimited access to their child when the child is in the facility. DCCECE requires CCDF families to update their childcare assistance application every six months. The Family Support workers provide case management services to clients by linking families to community resources and make referrals for services based on the client need. Family support workers also encourage parental involvement and referrals to local quality programs, Head Start programs, and ABC programs.

Table (A)(1)-9: Elements of a high-quality family engagement strategy currently required within the State

Please describe the types of high-quality family engagement strategies required in the State. Types of strategies may, for example, include parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent education in child development, outreach to fathers and other family members, training and support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten, social networks of support, intergenerational activities, linkages with community supports and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making, and parent leadership development.

Types of Programs or Systems	Describe Family Engagement Strategies Required Today
Current Quality Rating and Improvement System requirements <i>Specify by tier (add rows if needed):</i>	<p>Level 2- Providers watch a webinar for Strengthening Families. They are required to share information on medical homes and stages of development with families. Programs assessed with PAS/BAS which measures Family Engagement activities (no score required).</p> <p>Level 3-Providers complete a Strengthening Families online self-assessment for 3 or more Strategies, plus implement a plan in at least one action step. They share information regarding nutrition and physical activity with families. Programs assessed with PAS/BAS which measures Family Engagement activities (overall score of 4 required).</p>
State licensing requirements	<p>Each center is required to provide at least four of the options listed below to increase parental involvement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are allowed to observe, eat lunch with a child, or volunteer in the classroom. Conferences are held at least once a year and at other times, as needed, to discuss children's development and learning. A parent resource area is available with books, pamphlets or articles on parenting and child development. Parent meetings are held with guest speakers or special events, for example, open house or a family activity night. Parents are informed of the center's programs and activities through a parents' bulletin board, regular newsletter, email or web page. Parents participate in program and policy development through board involvement, planning meetings or questionnaires surveys.
Other <i>Describe:</i>	
<i>[Edit the labels on the above rows as needed, and enter text here to clarify or explain any of the data, if necessary.]</i>	

Table (A)(1)-10: Status of all early learning and development workforce credentials³⁶ currently available in the State				
List the early learning and development workforce credentials in the State	If State has a workforce knowledge and competency framework, is the credential aligned to it? <i>(Yes/No/Not Available)</i>	Number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who have the credential		Notes (if needed)
		#	%	
Teacher licensure with P4 endorsement	Yes	16,686	30%	State has a total of 55,736 teacher licenses; of those, 16,686 allow teachers to teach pre-school; before Kindergarten
CDA credential	Yes	1,786	3.2%	Source: Arkansas TAPP Registry
Birth-pre-kindergarten teaching credential	Yes	0	0	History
Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development or a related field	Yes	2,335	4.2%	Source: Arkansas TAPP Registry
Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development or a related field	Yes	1,318	2.4%	Source: Arkansas TAPP Registry
Associate's degree in Teaching	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>[Add additional rows as needed and enter text here to clarify or explain any of the data, if necessary.]</i>				

³⁶ Includes both credentials awarded and degrees attained.

Table (A)(1)-11: Summary of current postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in the State that issue credentials or degrees to Early Childhood Educators		
List postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in the State that issue credentials or degrees to Early Childhood Educators	Number of Early Childhood Educators that received an early learning credential or degree from this entity in the previous year	Does the entity align its programs with the State's current Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and progression of credentials? (Yes/No/ Not Available)
Arkansas Northeastern College	11	Yes
Arkansas State University – Beebe	1	Yes
Arkansas State University – Jonesboro	148	Yes
Arkansas State University – Mountain Home	1	Yes
Arkansas State University – Newport	0	Yes
Arkansas Tech University	0	Yes
Black River Technical College	79	Yes
Cossatot Community College of the UA	0	Yes
Henderson State University	2	Yes
Northwest Arkansas Community College	0	Yes
Ozarka College	11	Yes
Phillips Community College /UA	15	Yes
South Arkansas Community College	15	Yes
Southern Arkansas University – Magnolia	6	Yes
UA Community College at Batesville	69	Yes
University of Arkansas, Fort Smith	20	Yes
University of Arkansas at Little Rock	85	Yes
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff	35	Yes
University of Central Arkansas	11	Yes

Table (A)(1)-12: Current status of the State's Kindergarten Entry Assessment					
State's Kindergarten Entry Assessment	Essential Domains of School Readiness				
	Language and literacy	Cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development)	Approaches toward learning	Physical well-being and motor development	Social and emotional development
Domain covered? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Domain aligned to Early Learning and Development Standards? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	N/A	N/A
Instrument(s) used? (Specify)	Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI)	QELI	QELI	Hearing/Vision Screening	N/A
Evidence of validity and reliability? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	N/A	N/A
Evidence of validity for English learners? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	N/A	N/A
Evidence of validity for children with disabilities? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	N/A	N/A
How broadly administered? (If not administered statewide, include date for reaching statewide administration)	QELI is required by law to be administered to every incoming Kindergarten student and any first year first-grade student.	QELI is required by law to be administered to every incoming Kindergarten student and any first year first-grade student.	QELI is required by law to be administered to every incoming Kindergarten student and any first year first-grade student.	Hearing/Vision Screening required by law	N/A
Results included in Statewide Longitudinal Data System? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	Y	N/A

Table (A)(1)-13: Profile of all early learning and development data systems currently used in the State							
List each data system currently in use in the State that includes early learning and development data	Essential Data Elements						
	<i>Place an "X" for each Essential Data Element (refer to the definition) included in each of the State's data systems</i>						
	Unique child identifier	Unique Early Childhood Educator identifier	Unique program site identifier	Child and family demographic information	Early Childhood Educator demographic information	Data on program structure and quality	Child-level program participation and attendance
APSCN	X	X	X	X	X		
First Connections Comprehensive Data System (CDS) Funded by Part C IDEA	X		X	X			X
Other?							
<i>[Add additional rows as needed and enter text here to clarify or explain any of the data, if necessary.]</i>							

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

Project 1 (A)(1) Create Race to the Top Administrative Structure and Implementation Team					
Goal	Activity	Responsible Agency	Agencies Supporting and Advising	Timeline	Measure of Success
A1.1 Create staffing structure	A1.1.a. Hire RTT–ELC staff RTT–ELC Grant Manager Fiscal Grant Manager Data Grant Manager RTT–ELC Rural Grant Manager RTT–ELC Family Engagement Manager Administrative Technician	DCCECE	None	January 2014 to June 2014	All staff in place by 6/2014

(A)(2)(a) Goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes and closing educational gaps

Arkansas has 7 overall goals that will be achieved by the end of the grant period in December 2017 related to stronger system coordination, improved program quality, and significant positive child outcomes. The goals are ambitious, achievable and in line with the goals established by the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission in 2009. These goals were:

- Increase the number of infants and toddlers served in quality, licensed centers annually.
- Increase parental involvement in the child's education through research-based models and programs to enhance child outcomes and success in school annually.
- Through state policies, create an integrated system of professional development uniting the early childhood sectors that include child care, Head Start, pre-kindergarten, public schools, and early intervention and special education services (adopted from Workforce Designs: National Association for the Education of Young Children).
- Support implementation of Arkansas Better Beginnings.
- Strengthen and expand local and state partnerships with other agencies and organizations.

By the end of the grant period, Arkansas will have:

1. Full participation of all publically funded programs in a revised, validated Arkansas Better Beginnings TQRIS system that includes indicators of teacher-child interactions.
2. Developed and disseminated broadly a seamless set of culturally and linguistically birth–5 Early Learning and Development Standards that address all of the essential domains of school readiness and that are horizontally and vertically aligned.
3. High-quality screening and formative assessment practices utilized by all publically funded providers.
4. Fully executed a telehealth screening pilot conducted jointly by the Department of Child Care and Early Childhood Education and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences' Center on Distance Health
5. Created a statewide family engagement coalition and framework, local parent policy councils, developed stronger family engagement standards, and expanded effective family engagement models in the state.

6. Enhanced the existing professional development system to ensure that early childhood practitioners have the skills they need to positively impact the development Arkansas' young children, particularly those with high needs.
7. Fully implemented a revised KEA system that aligns to the revised early learning and development standards, has adequate psychometric properties for use with Arkansas' changing demographic population, and covers all of the essential domains of school readiness

(A)(2)(b)

To meet these goals, Arkansas has developed a set of projects specifically designed to enhance the quality of child care settings to improve outcomes for children not participating in the state's pre-kindergarten or Head Start programs and to take the state's pre-kindergarten program to the next level. These projects address the findings from Arkansas' KEA data discussed above; the needs of the state's children and their changing demographic makeup; the state's large population of rural children; and the significant gaps in high-quality services for Arkansas infants and toddlers. These projects include:

Project 1: Create the Appropriate Management Structure for the RTT–ELC Grant

As described in Section (A)(3), the state will:

1. Hire an overall RTT–ELC project manager, a rural RTT–ELC implementation specialist, a state family engagement coordinator, and other key staff.
2. Create project management teams.
3. Assemble or utilize currently existing interagency bodies as necessary.

Project 2: TQRIS Improvement

The project will create stronger program quality standards that incorporate licensing, comprehensive assessment, family engagement, and workforce development—which are at the heart of this RTT–ELC proposal. As described in detail in Section B, the state will:

1. Build upon existing tiers and modify the program standards and components of the state's TQRIS rating system based on recent evaluation findings. The rating system will include the state's new child care licensing regulations and align with national program quality standards. Revisions will result in the tiered rating levels being more clearly delineated among differing levels of quality, more psychometrically sound, and more predictive of child outcomes.

2. Increase the availability of financial supports and put in place new incentives for providers to participate in the TQRIS system and move up the rating scale.
3. Enhance professional development offerings to better align with staff qualifications and professional development requirements in the rating scale and offer supports to increase the qualifications of practitioners within TQRIS programs and move providers to higher ratings.
4. Build on its strong monitoring system, identify additional tools to measure structural and process measures as needed, and create a web-based system and other public awareness and communication efforts to provide information to parents regarding the ratings.
5. Issue an RFP to retain a qualified vendor to conduct a validation study to ensure the levels of the state's TQRIS meaningfully differentiate quality and are predictive of child outcomes.

Project 3: Develop, Align, and Implement “Best in Class” Early Learning and Development Standards

Arkansas' early learning and development standards are the foundation of the state's system of early care and education. A clear set of common expectations for what children should know and be able to do at different ages during the early childhood period is essential for system integration and to provide the end goals upon which to focus other elements of the system. The state will use the grant to create a “best in class” set of early learning standards for the state. As will be discussed in detail in (C)(1), the state will:

1. Use the latest research on child development and learning—including the recent work on executive function—to develop a set of research-based, measureable, and culturally and linguistically appropriate early learning standards. Unlike the current standards, the new standards will be conceived and developed as single birth–5 continuum of development and learning.
2. Horizontally align the standards to the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework and vertically align the standards to the state's K–12 and Common Core standards. A “Working off the Same Page” alignment document will be created (see Appendix A-2.1 for an example from Maryland) for practitioners.

3. Create ancillary products targeted toward and adapted for different audiences—including practitioners and parents—and provide professional development to ensure successful implementation.
4. Conduct extensive training on the standards to ensure they are well-understood and well-implemented.

Project 4: Expanding Comprehensive Assessment Practices to Arkansas' Child Care Community

Currently, Arkansas' Head Start and pre-kindergarten programs have a comprehensive assessment system in place that includes screening and formative assessment, as well as ratings of environmental quality and teacher–child interactions. The measures of teacher–child interactions used by Head Start are particularly strong as these programs use the *CLASS*, a research-based tool with strong psychometric properties. The *CLASS* focuses on the aspects of classroom quality known to be associated with positive child outcomes across domains of school readiness, including adult child-interactions.³⁷ As described in Section C, this project will expand the use of comprehensive assessment practices. The state will:

1. Make screening and formative assessment instruments—and training on those instruments—available to child care providers for free.
2. Embed the use of screening and formative assessment into the state's TQRIS and create incentives within the TQRIS to promote the use of comprehensive assessment practices among child care providers.
3. Initiate a “telehealth” pilot in rural areas so that providers can more easily refer rural children who have received a positive screen to specialists.
4. Embed use of the infant and toddler and preschool *CLASS* assessments within the higher tiers of the state's TQRIS.

Project 5: Family engagement

Partnerships between early care and education programs and families are a critical ingredient to high-quality learning experiences for young children. The state has several initiatives to strengthen the capacity of Arkansas families to support their children (see Table (A)(1)-9).

³⁷Mashburn, A.J., Pianta, R.C., Hamre, B.K., Downer, J.T., Barbarin, O.A. Bryant, D., Burchinal, M., Early, D.M. & Howes, C. (2008). Measures of classroom quality in prekindergarten and children's development of academic, language, and social skills.” *Child Development*, 79, 732-749.

Despite these many substantial supports to promote family engagement, the state lacks a coordinated framework to unify these initiatives and ensure that all family engagement efforts are directed toward a common set of goals. In order to create and sustain strategic change for Arkansas children and families, the State seeks to develop a number of initiatives at the state and local level which will increase the coherence and continuity of family engagement strategies, streamline the delivery of family engagement supports, and promote a common understanding of family engagement goals among the early care and education community. To achieve these goals, the state will:

1. Create the Arkansas Family Engagement Coalition at the state-level consisting of parents, practitioners, policymakers, administrators, advocates, and other stakeholders
2. Create an Arkansas Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework, modeled on the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework. The framework will define the state's goals for family engagement and be used both as a self-assessment to determine family engagement needs and also as a lens through which early childhood programs and policies are evaluated.
3. Create a state Early Childhood Parent Policy Council modeled on the Head Start policy councils. This state-level council will consist of parents from across the state and will provide guidance on the state's early childhood policy. The Council also will be tasked with developing and training policy councils in the state's pre-kindergarten program.
4. Expand successful parent engagement models, including Strengthening Families, Welcome the Children, TIPS for Great Kids, and the Family Map Inventories, specifically targeting infant and toddler programs.

Project 6: Professional Development

The state will build upon existing professional development efforts and modify and enhance key components and resources to ensure that early childhood practitioners have the skills they need to positively impact the development of Arkansas' young children, particularly those with high needs.

1. Modify the "Arkansas Key Content Areas and Competencies for Early Childhood Providers" document to ensure alignment with national recommendations. Most of the current trainings and college course work are required to be aligned with the key competencies. The state will inventory all trainings and college coursework to ensure this continues.

2. Conduct a workforce study in order to better understand the current status of the state's early childhood workforce.
3. Enhance and increase the capacity of the TAPP Registry to collect data on the early childhood workforce so that information can be aggregated and communicated to key stakeholders, policymakers and the general public on the status of the state's early childhood workforce.
4. Build a comprehensive professional development system and career lattice that provides opportunities for required training, coaching/mentoring and financial supports that enable practitioners to increase their knowledge and skills along an articulated pathway of career development.
5. Increase access to trainings for early care and education providers and practitioners in rural communities through a variety of evidence-based and promising approaches to improving teacher capacity including distance learning, media resources, and video-based coaching.
6. Monitor the use of professional development bonus award/professional development grants and policies around the development of Individual Professional Growth Plans to encourage the use of funds towards college coursework; increase the availability of scholarships for practitioners who want to pursue college credit towards obtaining degrees and credentials.

Project 7: Kindergarten Entry Assessment

The state is proposing through this application a new KEA assessment tool that includes the domains of physical and social–emotional development, has strong psychometric assessment properties—particularly for use with dual language learners and children with disabilities—and more closely aligns to the state's revised early learning and development standards. Specifically, the state will:

1. Purchase and adapt a new KEA instrument that addresses all of the essential domains of school readiness
2. Ensure that the KEA instrument and any adaptations or supplements to the instrument have strong assessment properties, for all children
3. Develop teacher and parent-friendly reports, and data feed-back loops to teachers so they can use the KEA data more effectively in support instruction

4. Prove training for kindergarten teachers on how to implement the assessment and use the results for curriculum planning
5. Foster cross-systems integration of early childhood and kindergarten programs

(A)(2)(c) Rationale for selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area

In Selection Criteria C—Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes For Children—Arkansas will address (C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards, (C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems, and (C)(4) Engaging and Supporting Families.

Arkansas has chosen to focus on Investment Area (C)(1)—Early Learning and Development Standards—for the following reasons:

1. At the heart of an integrated and aligned early learning and development system is a common set of expectations for children—articulated by early learning and development standards—across all providers and early learning and development funding streams. The process of combining the state’s two sets of early learning and development guidelines into one birth–5 continuum of early learning standards (discussed in Section (C)(1)) is designed to bring all stakeholders together to agree on common expectations for all children (typically developing, children with disabilities, dual language learners, and other children with high needs) for all program types (Head Start, Arkansas Better Chance pre-kindergarten program, child care providers, home visiting programs, etc.).
2. Early learning and development standards are a stronger driver of early childhood outcomes when they act as the foundation for other system improvements. Section (C)(1) and the other relevant sections contain plans for the implementation of the new standards that include alignment to curriculum, formative assessment, and the K–12 standards; incorporation into the TQRIS; inclusion as a competency for early childhood professionals; and parent and family engagement activities.
3. The changing demographics in the state require that the standards be revised to better address the needs of dual language learners as a growing population in Arkansas.
4. The proposed birth–5 standards will be developed with a universal design philosophy to better address the needs of young children with disabilities.

Arkansas has chosen to focus on Investment Area (C)(2)—Comprehensive Assessment Systems—for the following reasons:

1. The research charting the relationship between early identification of developmental delays, early intervention, and positive child outcomes is unequivocal.³⁸ Currently, the ABC program has an exceptional screening and referral protocol as do the state's Head Start and Early Head Start programs. In a unified early childhood system, whether a child with high needs attends Head Start, the state pre-kindergarten program, or a child care center should not determine whether he or she receives a screening. Accordingly, section(C)(2) describes how the state plans to streamline the number of screening tools used in the state and significantly expand the number of children in the state who are screened through an initiative that targets child care programs receiving subsidy vouchers.
2. Given that children develop at different rates and have different experiences prior to entering a specific early childhood setting, formative assessment is essential for curriculum planning and individualizing instruction. Similar to the implementation of screening in the state across programs, the use of formative assessment practices is widespread in the state's pre-kindergarten and Head Start programs. Similarly, section (C)(2) describes how the state plans to streamline the number of assessment tools used in the state and significantly expand the use of formative assessment in child care programs through an initiative that targets programs receiving subsidy vouchers.
3. Measures of environment quality like the Environmental Rating Scales have been used in Arkansas for some time to assess the quality of child care programs. These process measures of child care included in these scales are key indicators of the early childhood setting such as the space, schedule, materials, and interactions between staff.
4. Outcomes related to the process of learning have been increasing linked to teacher–child interactions (Curby et al., 2009; Mashburn et al., 2008). This includes the sensitivity and

³⁸ See, for example, Guralnick, M. J. (1997). *The effectiveness of early intervention*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing; Hebbeler, K., Spiker, D., Bailey, D., Scarborough, A., Mallik, S., Simeonsson, R., & Singer, M. (2007). *Early intervention for infants & toddlers with disabilities and their families: participants, services, and outcomes. Final report of the National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study (NEILS)*. Retrieved from: http://www.sri.com/neils/pdfs/NEILS_Report_02_07_Final2.pdf; and Bailey, D.B., Hebbeler, K., Spiker, D., Scarborough, A., Mallik, S., Nelson, L. (2005). Thirty-six-month outcomes for families of children who have disabilities and participated in early intervention. *Pediatrics*, 116(6): 1346-52.

responsiveness of the teacher (emotional support); the ways in which teachers orient children toward routines and activities and engage in behavior management (organizational support); and the nature and quality of instruction offered to support children's learning (instructional support; Curby et al., 2009). As such, Section (C)(2) also describes how the state will expand the use of the *CLASS*. The *Infant CLASS*, *Toddler CLASS*, and *CLASS Pre-K*, will be used to measure teacher–child interactions. The *CLASS* has strong psychometric properties and has been shown to predict children's academic and social gains even after controlling for factors such as pretest scores and child and family characteristics (Howes et al., 2008; Mashburn et al., 2008).

Arkansas has chosen to focus on Investment Area (C)(4)—Engaging and Supporting Families—for the following reasons:

1. Although the state has invested heavily in family engagement programs, these programs have not been well-coordinated at the state level. The creation of an Arkansas Family Engagement Coalition and an Arkansas Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework provides a coordinating body and structure through which to organize, evaluate, and coordinate the state's family engagement initiatives.
2. The RTT–ELC grant also provides the state with the opportunity to take the next step in engaging parents as key stakeholders in systems planning. Parents will be at the center of the planning process for defining parent and family engagement in the state and local levels, establishing parent and family engagement goals, promoting common strategies across early learning and development programs, and defining family engagement outcomes.
3. The state also sees families as the most important link between the early childhood and K–12 systems. As such, they are at the center of the state's transition strategies and the ability to sustain the gains made in early childhood into the early elementary grades.

Arkansas has chosen to focus on Investment Area (D)(1)—Developing Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework—for the following reasons:

1. The state has maintained a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework since 2009, the “Arkansas Key Content and Competencies for Early Childhood Providers.” The state recognizes the need to revise and update the framework in order to align with updated National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recommendations and requirements to earn a Child Development Associate (CDA)

degree. In addition, after several years of implementation there is a need to increase its functionality, most importantly streamlining and formatting for easier use by practitioners and trainers.

2. The state recognizes the need to improve the TAPP—the state’s early childhood professional development system—which includes the TAPP Map and the TAPP Registry. Based on results of an evaluation study and knowledge gained about the effectiveness of the professional development system, improvements to the TAPP Map will more clearly delineate professional development pathways for Arkansas’ early childhood providers and increase capacity for the TAPP Registry in order to capture data on the status of the state’s early childhood workforce. Arkansas will begin by conducting a workforce study in order to obtain baseline data, which has never been done before. The status of early childhood educators’ knowledge and education cannot be obtained through any of the current databases, which makes it difficult to determine what supports and training are needed. Licensing regulations and policies will be put in place to require participation and increase the type of data currently collected within the system.

Arkansas also is choosing to focus on (D)(2)—Supporting Early Childhood Educators in Improving Their Knowledge, Skills and Abilities.

1. The state provides Bonus Awards and professional development grants to early childhood programs participating in the AR–BB TQRIS. The state will conduct a study to examine how funds are used within these programs and if results increase providers’ education and knowledge.
2. In order to increase access to training and supports—especially for those providers in rural communities—the state will expand and enhance the early childhood professional development infrastructure. The infrastructure will expand the regional training framework to meet the needs of both urban and rural providers so they may participate in training that will be required with the revision of the AR–BB TQRIS and can move to higher levels of quality. Additional training enhancements and pilot projects will be implemented in order to continually evaluate the most effective approaches to delivering training.

In Selection Criteria E—Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children—Arkansas will address (E)(1). Arkansas has chosen to focus on Investment Area (E)(1)—Understanding the State of Children’s Learning and Development—for the following reasons:

1. For nearly a decade, the state has been able to track the readiness of children entering kindergarten. This data has been used to inform the Arkansas Department of Education, the Arkansas Legislature, the stakeholder community, and kindergarten classroom teachers. The state is looking to build on its robust KEA system by selecting a new assessment instrument that will closely align to the revised early learning standards that will be created as part of (C)(1).
2. Given the changing demographics of children, the state is looking for a KEA instrument that is more psychometrically sound overall, but also has stronger assessment protocols and psychometric properties for dual language learners and children with disabilities.

Identification of the two or more selection criteria that the State has chosen to address in Focused Investment Area (C):

Please check the box to indicate which selection criterion or criteria in Focused Investment Area (D) the State is choosing to address

- ☒ (C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.
- ☒ (C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.
- ☐ (C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.
- ☒ (C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.

Identification of the one or more selection criteria that the State has chosen to address in Focused Investment Area (D):

Please check the box to indicate which selection criterion or criteria in Focused Investment Area (D) the State is choosing to address

- ☒ (D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.
- ☒ (D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Identification of the one or more selection criteria that the State has chosen to address in Focused Investment Area (E):

Please check the box to indicate which selection criterion or criteria in Focused Investment Area (E) the State is choosing to address

- ☒ (E)(1) Understanding the status of children’s learning and development at kindergarten entry.
- ☐ (E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.

(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the state

In 1997, years before most states, the Arkansas Legislature passed Act 1132, a landmark piece of legislation that transferred a majority of early care and education functions to the DCCECE within the Arkansas DHS. The purpose of DCCECE is to enhance the coordination of child care and early childhood education programs and to promote high-quality early care and education. DCCECE now administers and coordinates licensing, the child care subsidy program, the Child and Adult Food Program, the National School Lunch program, the Special Nutrition and Summer Food Service Programs, the state’s TQRIS and pre-kindergarten programs, and child welfare residential licensing. In addition, DCCECE has strong lines of communication with the Head Start State Collaboration Office.

In addition to DCCECE, a number of other administrative agencies will have a role in the implementation of the RTT–ELC grant: the Arkansas Departments of Health, Education, and Higher Education. In addition to these agencies, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Solutions will be a consulting partner in the grant application. Figure A(3)-1 provides the organizational structure of the state departments that touch different aspects the early childhood system as well as the respective offices running different early childhood programs.

(A)(3)(a)(1) Organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures

Arkansas’ success in reforming its early care and education system to date is in large part the result of the strengths of the early childhood organizational structure. These strengths include a strong leadership team within DCCECE, Arkansas’ interagency and stakeholder governance structures; and a strong working relationship among the agencies that touch the early

childhood system. Most notably, the state’s early childhood administrative structure benefits from the work of the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission, one of the oldest state early childhood advisory bodies in the country. The Commission serves as Arkansas’ State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (SAC). The 18-member Commission brings together stakeholders, schools, providers, pediatricians, mental health professionals, parents and others to advise and approve early childhood reforms in the state (see Appendix A-3.1 for the composition of the Commission and its specific responsibilities). In addition, the state has a high-performing State and Local Interagency Coordinating Council for Early Intervention Services, whose responsibility it is to advise and assist the early intervention program, First Connections. Management of the RTT–ELC grant will build upon the successes of the structure and draw upon its resources.

DCCECE will be the lead agency and single point of accountability for the implementation of the RTT–ELC grant. DCCECE will make a strong lead agency given its current role in implementing a majority of the state’s early childhood programs and initiatives, and its legislative mandate to enhance the coordination and promote high-quality early care and education. Tonya Williams, director of DCCECE, has years of leadership experience between her role at DCCECE and her prior role as Arkansas’ first Head Start state collaboration director. DCCECE’s purview over the majority of early childhood activities in the state will give it the authority to issue directives, with Early Childhood Commission approval, on a majority of the projects outlined in this proposal, and the authority to make requests of other participating agencies as outlined in the respective MOU discussed below.

To manage the grant, DCCECE will create four project teams, each consisting of a team lead that will meet regularly to implement and report progress on RTT–ELC projects:

1. Standards, Comprehensive Assessment, and KEA
2. Workforce
3. TQRIS Reform, and
4. Family Support and Engagement.

In addition to these project teams, the state plans to hire:

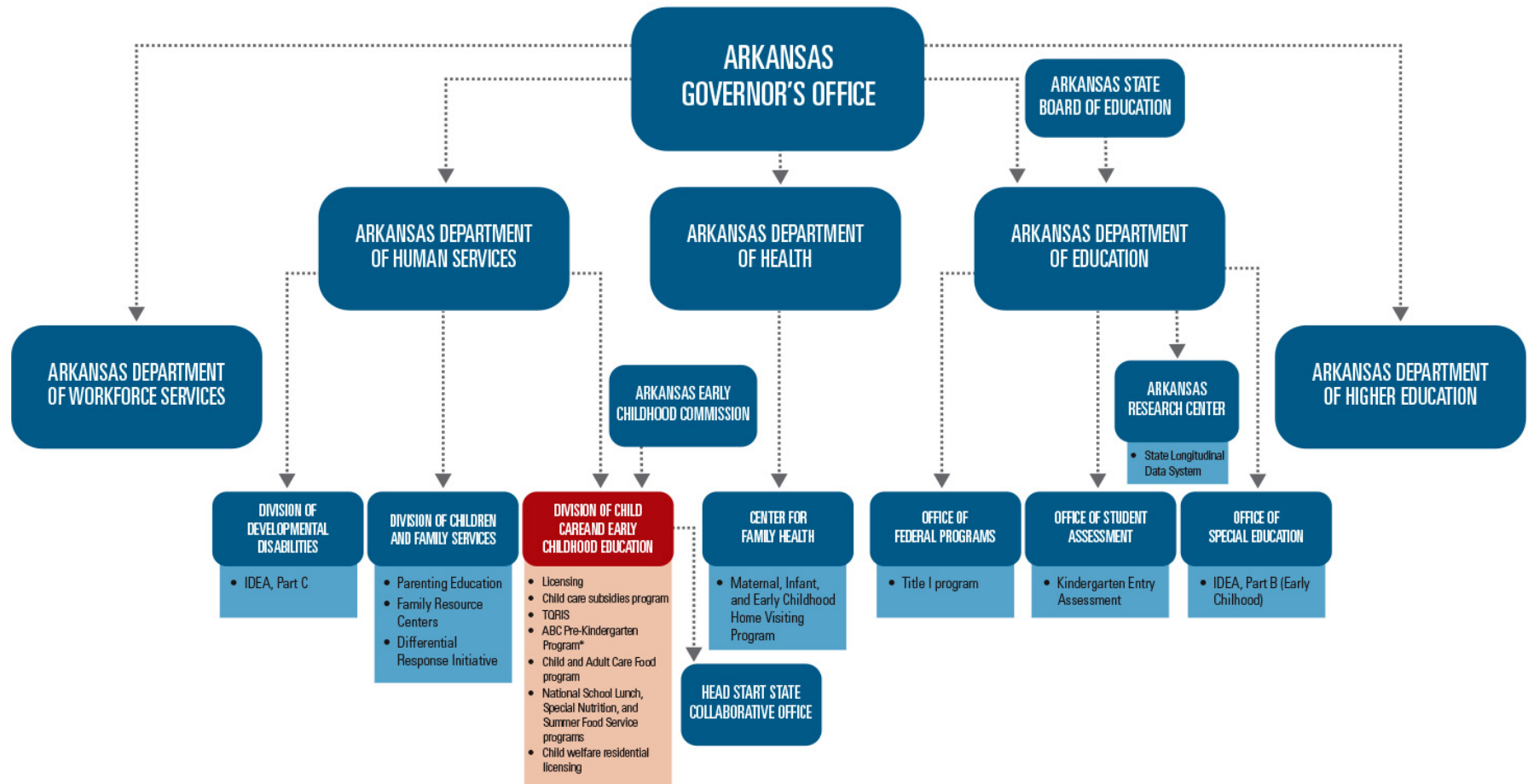
1. An overall **RTT–ELC grant manager** who will for monitor implementation of project plans, establish a progress monitoring review process, identify and request technical assistance (TA) from national TA providers, operate as point of contact with federal

partners, submit all required federal reports, and establish a targeted performance measure review process.

2. A **fiscal grant manager** who, in coordination with the RTT–ELC grant manager, will be responsible for monitoring grant expenditures. These responsibilities include: create budget guidance for allocating funds, establish and monitor fiscal controls and procedures for program funds, monitor contract and sub-contract procedures, and submit federal reports.
3. A **data grant manager** who will be responsible for accessing and coordinating data efforts across agencies.
4. An **RTT–ELC rural manager** who will ensure that rural issues are embedded and considered throughout the implementation of grant activities and policy development.
5. An **RTT–ELC family engagement manager** who will ensure successful implementation of family engagement activities throughout administration of the grant.
6. An **administrative technician** who will assist the RTT–ELC grant manager in meeting all federal reporting requirements and communication needs.

DCCECE also will convene senior-level staff from each of the participating agencies at regular intervals to assist, advise, and share progress on RTT–ELC projects. DCCECE will have the authority to hire—through the appropriate state procurement processes—consultants as necessary to support stakeholder involvement and communication, provide substantive expertise, and support other areas as necessary to successfully accomplish its RTT–ELC goals.

FIGURE A.3.1 RACE TO THE TOP-EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART: GOVERNANCE-RELATED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



*The ABC pre-kindergarten program is administered by the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood but funded through the Arkansas Department of Education. As such, changes to the program require State Board of Education approval.

(A)(3)(a)(2) Governance-related roles and responsibilities

DCCECE will be the lead agency and the fiscal agent of the grant, as defined by the application. Mark Story, the lead fiscal person for DCCECE with five years of experience at DCCECE and an additional 3 years of experience as an Accountant at KPMG, will oversee the financial administration of the grant. Story and other DCCECE staff will coordinate with other agencies and prepare fiscal reports as required by the RTT–ELC grant management system. An RTT–ELC Interagency Project Management Team (IPMT) consisting of high-level staff from each participating agency will be created to coordinate inter-agency projects. The IPMT will be managed by the overall RTT–ELC grant manager at DCCECE.

(A)(3)(a)(3) Method and process for making decisions and resolving disputes

The director of DCCECE will use the project management teams and the IPMT to address cross-agency barriers and process recommendations for policy and project decisions affecting multiple agencies. It will be the role of the director to bring recommendations of the project management teams and the IPMT to the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission when necessary. Disputes among agencies will be resolved by the director. Appeals to decisions made by the director in the resolution of disputes will be taken to the governor’s office.

(A)(3)(a)(4) How the State will involve representatives and stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant

Arkansas places high value on the perspectives of stakeholders and practitioners, as well as understanding the impact that new policies and initiatives will have on them. It is well understood that early childhood policies and initiatives created at the state level are simply “words on paper” and it takes the dedicated implementation of empowered practitioners and stakeholders to realize their true impact. Given this perspective, it is important to note that stakeholder approval in the planning and implementation of all major early childhood decisions is institutionalized through the Arkansas Early Learning Commission. The Commission—consisting of a broad representation of stakeholders, including parents—advises and must approve all projects before they are finalized. This is true of RTT–ELC projects as well. In addition, the state plans to more strongly involve parents and families of children with high needs through the creation of a state Family Engagement Coalition and a state Early Childhood

Parent Policy Council (described in Section (C)). Finally, each high-quality plan outlined in this proposal has numerous opportunities for stakeholder input and feedback.

(A)(3)(b) Demonstration of State Agency Commitment

The DCCECE has obtained MOUs for all participating state agencies. These MOUs are included in Appendix A-3.2 of this document.

(A)(3)(c) Demonstration of Commitment from Stakeholders

Arkansas' plan for early childhood systems reform has widespread support from the state's advocates, schools, pediatricians, business leaders, practitioners, and philanthropic community. The state has received 30 letters from social services providers who would help provide services as part of the grant; higher education providers who would support pre-service and in-service training for early childhood educators; the state's interagency coordinating council that would support initiatives related to children in Part C of IDEA; parent groups that would be involved in the family engagement initiatives; and, school boards that are part of the state's transition strategies to help sustain outcomes into the early grades. In addition, the letters reflect the diversity of Arkansas's stakeholders including the state's minority children (Minority Health Commission, One Community, and the African American Male Initiative), the state's rural children (Rural Education Association and Rural Alliance), the state's immigrant children (Welcome the Children), the state's children with special needs (State Interagency Coordinating Council), as well as seniors, police officers, the Junior League, and the business community. These letters are included in Appendix A-3.

Table (A)(3)-1: Governance-related roles and responsibilities	
Participating State Agency	Governance-related roles and responsibilities
AR Department of Human Services/ Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education	Responsible for administration of grant, working in partnership with the AR Early Childhood Commission to carry out goals of the grant, reporting to AECC and other RTT/ELC partners
AR Department of Education	Responsible for identifying staff to work on project teams, major role in review, identification, selection and training for new Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Responsible for reviewing policies with regard to programs funded through Part B and Title I and participation in AR–BB. Responsible for reporting to AECC, DCCECE and other RTT/ELC partners.
AR Department of Higher Education	Responsible for assisting with identifying ADHE staff and staff from local institutions of higher education to serve on project teams specifically the work on professional development. Responsible for administering scholarship program for early childhood professionals in partnership with DCCECE. Responsible for reporting to AECC, DCCECE and other RTT/ELC partners.
AR Department of Human Services/Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (Part C)	Responsible for supporting staff to serve on project teams, full participation of Part C programs in AR–BB and reporting to AECC, DCCECE and other RTT/ELC partners.
Other Entities	
State advisory council on early childhood education and care	The Commission will serve as the governance body for the grant. AECC will work with DCCECE to carry out goals of the grant by advising, approving, and serving on project teams.
State Interagency Coordinating Council for Part C of IDEA	The State ICC will assist DCCECE by identifying members or partners that best represent the needs of children with special needs to serve on project teams. Encouraging policies for Part C’s full participation in AR–BB.
Other <i>Specify:</i> AR Head Start Collaboration Office	The Head Start Collaboration Office will assist the AECC and DCCECE by identifying Head Start program staff to serve on project teams specifically the work of on standards alignment and family engagement and getting full Head Start participation in AR–BB.

Table (A)(3)-1: Governance-related roles and responsibilities	
Participating State Agency	Governance-related roles and responsibilities
Other Entities	
State advisory council on early childhood education and care	The Commission will serve as the governance body for the grant. AECC will work with DCCECE to carry out goals of the grant by advising, approving, and serving on project teams.
State Interagency Coordinating Council for Part C of IDEA	The State ICC will assist DCCECE by identifying members or partners that best represent the needs of children with special needs to serve on project teams. Encouraging policies for Part C's full participation in AR–BB.
Other <i>Specify:</i> AR Head Start Collaboration Office	The Head Start Collaboration Office will assist the AECC and DCCECE by identifying Head Start program staff to serve on project teams specifically the work of on standards alignment and family engagement and getting full Head Start participation in AR–BB.
Other <i>Specify:</i>	

Table (A)(3)-2: Early Learning Intermediary Organizations and local early learning councils (if applicable)	
List every Intermediary Organization and local early learning council (if applicable) in the State	Did this entity provide a letter of intent or support which is included in the Appendix (Y/N)?
AR Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative	Y
AR Association of Educational Administrators	Y
AR Children's Hospital	Y
Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (State Office)/AR Children's Hospital	Y
AR Early Childhood Association	Y
Child Care Aware of Northeast Arkansas/AR State University Childhood Services	Y
Arkansas Head Start Association	Y
Child Care Aware of North Central Arkansas/local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency	Y

Table (A)(3)-2: Early Learning Intermediary Organizations and local early learning councils (if applicable)	
List every Intermediary Organization and local early learning council (if applicable) in the State	Did this entity provide a letter of intent or support which is included in the Appendix (Y/N)?
Arkansas Department of Health	Y
Arkansas Department of Human Services/Division of Children and Family Services	Y
Interagency Coordinating Council	Y
Child Care Aware of Southeast Arkansas/Jefferson Comprehensive Care System Inc.	Y
Child Care Aware of Northwest Arkansas and the River Valley	Y
Rural Community Alliance	Y
Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families	Y
Arkansas Center for Health Improvement	Y
Arkansas Minority Health Commission	Y
Arkansas Surgeon General	Y
Teachers College, Henderson State University	Y
First Connections, Arkansas Part C program under IDEA	Y
One Community	Y
Arkansas Rural Education Association	Y
Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading	Y
Little Rock chapter of the American Association of University Women	Y
Arkansas Home Visiting Network	Y
Arkansas Pilot Safe Babies Court Team/ Zero To Three	Y
Arkansas Special Education Early Childhood Professionals	Y
Arkansas State Library	Y
Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance	Y
Partners for Inclusive Communities	Y
<i>[Add additional rows as needed and enter text here to clarify or explain any of the data, if necessary.]</i>	

(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.

a. Existing funds that support early learning and development

Arkansas is well positioned to bring together the various early childhood funding sources and leverage existing resources in a comprehensive manner. As mentioned in (A)(3)(a)(1) Arkansas passed Act 1132 which transferred the majority of early care and education programs and oversight to DCCECE within the Department of Human Services. DCCECE administers and coordinates licensing, the child care subsidy program, the Child and Adult Food Program, the National School Lunch program, the Special Nutrition and Summer Food Service Programs, the state's TQRIS and pre-kindergarten programs, and child welfare residential licensing. In addition, DCCECE will also be the lead agency and fiscal agent for the state. This centralization of all key early childhood programs and funding sources will allow the state to align existing funds and build upon the states strengths. The state will use RTT–ELC funds to address the gaps in resources and allow us the ability to make the needed reforms to build a more coordinated and sustainable early childhood system.

Current funds will be used to build the foundation to the improvements proposed with RTT – ELC funds.

- ***Child Care Development Block Grant*** – the Arkansas Department of Human Resources is the state agency which provides oversight for the federal Child Care Development block grant. These funds are used to provide child care and improve the quality of child care in the state. Arkansas spends an additional seven million in state general revenue to meet maintenance of efforts and state match requirements for the CCDF block grant funds. Below is a listing of activities and programs funded with CCDF dollars. As outlined in the application the state is building upon these programs and existing activities.
 - ***Arkansas Better Beginnings (AR–BB)*** – AR–BB is the tiered quality rating and improvement system for Arkansas. The system gives Arkansas early childhood educators valuable tools for improving the quality of their programs. Communication efforts promote parents understanding of the value of quality children care and provide them with an online website to identify and locate child care within their communities.

- ***Intensive Coaching*** – Technical assistance provided by regional coaches to child care programs that serve high-risk populations and have a history of licensing issues high rate of vouchers, and/or area serving infants and toddlers. Coaching is intensive and focused on compliance and accountability to improve the child care program.
- ***Project PLAY (Positive Learning for Arkansas' Youngest)***—Promotes best practices through early childhood mental health consultation in serving foster care children who also receive CCDF vouchers.
- ***Infant/Toddler Child Care Health Consultants*** – regional staff support expansion and improvement of infant toddler care and child health issues.
- ***Quality Marketing Campaign*** – a marketing campaign that educates Arkansas parents and educators about the importance of Quality Early Childhood Development and Education.
- ***Quality Care Too Kit*** – Training that supports the use of online and hard copy too kit items, self- assessments, technical assistance tools, and implementation.
- ***TIPS*** – Brief parenting interventions tip sheets distributed to classrooms targeting programs with high voucher usage.
- ***Al's Pals/Kids/Making Health Choices*** – This program provides regional training on child health and targets 60 classrooms per year in programs with high voucher usage.
- ***Al's Caring Pals – A Social Skills Tool Kit for Home Child Care Providers*** – This training social emotional development targets programs with high voucher usage in five regions.
- ***Infant Toddler Educational Framework training*** – expand train the trainer programs and local delivery of training on the Arkansas Framework for Infant Toddler Care.
- ***Parent Training*** – training provided to women in substance abuse homes.
- ***Ages and Stages Questionnaire training*** – assists programs in implementing the ASQ in child care programs that serve at least 50% voucher enrolled.
- ***Business Model Training*** – training center based and family child care programs focused on good business practices, fiscal management that may be new or may have compliance concerns.

- ***Arkansas Better Chance***(ABC) Pre-kindergarten funding – The Arkansas Better Chance program is funded through an appropriation in the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) Public School Fund budget. ADE contracts with DCCECE to administer the program. DCCECE is responsible for all operational duties associated with ABC. All children whose family income does not exceed 200% of FPL are eligible to apply. The ABC Programs budget is \$111 million annually and serves over 25,000 children age 3 -5. Arkansas appropriates \$103 million in general appropriations to this program, with \$7.5 million TANF Block Grant funds.
- *Head Start Collaboration* – DCCECE works in partnership with the Collaboration Office as the pass through entity for Head Start Collaboration and State Advisory council funding in an effort to ensure the most beneficial integration of the two federally funded programs.
- *Maternal and Child Health Block Grant* (MCH) – DCCECE receives a portion of the MCH Block grant funds in addition to funding provided by the Arkansas Department of Health in implementing the activities and programs for the Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant.
- *Title IV E* – in association with the Division for Family Services, DCCECE utilizes Title IV E funds to provide child care to qualifying child care programs.

**BOLDED items denote activities highlighted in the RTT – ELC application.*

b. Describes, in both the budget tables and budget narratives, how the State will effectively and efficiently use funding from this grant to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, in a manner that--

1. Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan;
2. Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served; and
3. Details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan, and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and

The State's response to (A)(4)(b) is addressed in the Budget Section, section VIII.

c. Sustainability

Many of the projects described in the application in which RTT–ELC funding will be used are designed to revise, modify, improve and/or evaluate systems (e.g. comprehensive assessment system or TQIRS validation study), or institutionalize policies (e.g. revised early learning development standards or workforce knowledge and competencies) and procedures (e.g. sustainable system in which all training and college course work is aligned with the state's workforce knowledge and competencies). The state has been intentional in its approach to identify RTT–ELC efforts that will be sustainable with existing state and federal funds beyond the grant period. The state's intention is to use this opportunity to provide additional funding resources and training and technical assistance supports to improve the quality of existing early care and education programs during the four year period. For example, Project 5 (D)(2)—Supporting Early Childhood Educators in Improving Their Knowledge, Skills and Abilities—outlines activities to increase the amount of scholarship funds available to early childhood programs enrolled in Better Beginnings. With the recent requirement that all programs receiving voucher subsidies be enrolled in Better Beginnings by October 1, 2014, there will be an immediate need to increase supports available to programs and providers.. The state is anticipating an influx of up to 400 additional programs over two to four years. This will increase the number of providers and practitioners who will need additional financial supports to pursue additional training and higher education in order to meet the higher staff qualifications in Better Beginnings. The state believes this demand will be temporary and RTT –ELC dollars will be used to build out the current professional development and scholarships programs over the next four years. Existing funds for professional development and scholarships are currently in place should be sufficient to meet the ongoing demand in the future beyond the grant period.

Evidence for (A)(4)(a):

- The completed table listing the existing funds to be used to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan (see Table (A)(4)-1).
- Description of how these existing funds will be used for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan.

Evidence for (A)(4)(b):

- The State's budget (completed in section VIII).

- The narratives that accompany and explain the budget, and describe how it connects to the State Plan (also completed in section VIII). \

Arkansas' RTT – ELC proposal consists of seven projects as described in the application. Each of the seven projects and proposed funded activities are described in the Budget narrative in section VIII.

Table (A)(4) – 1 Existing other Federal, State, private, and local funds to be used to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan.					
Source of Funds	Fiscal Year 2014	Fiscal Year 2015	Fiscal Year 2016	Fiscal Year 2017	Total
<i>CCDF</i>	48,600,000	48,600,000	48,600,000	48,600,000	194,400,000
<i>USDA</i>	80,000,000	85,000,000	90,000,000	95,000,000	350,000,000
<i>State Funded Pre-K</i>	93,500,000	93,500,000	93,500,000	93,500,000	374,000,000
<i>TANF</i>	7,500,000	7,500,000	7,500,000	7,500,000	30,000,000
<i>State GR</i>	6,200,000	6,200,000	6,200,000	6,200,000	24,800,000
<i>Total</i>	235,800,000	240,800,000	245,800,000	250,800,000	973,200,000
<i>[Add additional rows as needed and enter text here to clarify or explain any of the data, if necessary.]</i>					

(B) High-Quality, Accountable Program

(B) (1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

Background

For more than twenty years, Arkansas has advocated for and promoted access to high-quality early learning and development programs for its children with high needs. As evident by the timeline in Section A(1), Arkansas was an early adopter of a voluntary statewide quality rating and assurance system. In 1993, the state implemented *Quality Approval* (QA) with the dual goals of improving early learning and development programs and providing parents with additional program quality information to guide their choice of early education and care. Programs participating in the QA system were assessed with an environmental quality assessment—the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ERS)—and given a QA accreditation with an average score higher than five (indicating a high-quality environment). A review of participation rates in the early 2000s revealed that few programs outside of Head Start or state pre-kindergarten programs participated in the voluntary QA program. Key early childhood stakeholders offered the insight that program participation was limited due to the fact that the QA system had only one defined level of quality, which was perceived as an overwhelmingly large step for most market-based programs. Inadequate financing of QA to provide the appropriate incentives and supports also hindered provider participation.³⁹ As such, the goals of the QA system were not achieved in that it was of limited utility in improving the quality of, or providing quality information on, the vast majority of market-based early care and education programs in the state.

In 2004, Arkansas used funding made available through the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grant to begin planning and developing a statewide TQRIS built upon the QA infrastructure to better achieve the initial goals of the Quality Approval system. The logic guiding the new TQRIS was to address the issue that the QA system set the quality threshold too high for the state’s market-based programs. The new TQRIS would create new lower tiers that would provide programs with a pathway to the highest tier, which would correspond to the former QA accreditation.

³⁹The financing available for the QA system only allowed for small yearly bonuses for providers obtaining the accreditation and provided no other incentives.

After a six-year process of development, stakeholder input, and revision, the three-tiered Arkansas Better Beginnings (AR–BB) tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS) was launched in 2010. All QA accredited programs in the state were automatically given a Level III rating. The tiers of the new AR–BB TQRIS are defined using a set of program standards that address five key components of program quality: Administration; Administrator and Staff Qualifications and Professional Development; Child Health and Development; Environmental Assessment; and, Learning Environment. The TQRIS uses a “block” scoring system where providers must meet all of the criteria for a tier in order to receive that rating. The specific elements of each tier are included in Appendix B-1.1. The AR–BB TQRIS also includes stronger supports for participating programs including free training and other professional development supports for all pre-kindergarten, Head Start, licensed and registered child care programs that serve children birth to five, including center based and family child care.

To communicate with families about AR–BB the state developed a website (*arbetterbeginnings.com*) that provides a host of information for families on the following topics:

- Understanding early learning and development (the site has a “born learning” section)
- The types of care that are available
- What quality looks like in each type of setting
- A checklist when reviewing providers and making a choice of care
- An explanation of the TQRIS levels; and,
- A search function for child care providers in which the highest rated providers on the TQRIS display first within the other search parameters (location, cost, etc.)

In addition to the website, the state also uses social media, including Facebook and Twitter, and also has a YouTube channel.

With the new tiers and the more intensive communication strategies, the state saw a 28 percent increase in the number of providers participating in the TQRIS compared to QA. Yet, given the state’s experience with low take-up rates of providers into the QA system, DCCECE initiated a continuous improvement process immediately upon implementation of the new TQRIS. Through surveys and stakeholder forums the state monitored the new TQRIS to determine barriers to participation, and to solicit ways of improving how to communicate the responsibilities, supports, and financial benefits of participation in the new system.

Despite the increase in participation in the new TQRIS, the continuous improvement process revealed that elements of the design and the way the TQRIS was communicated still limited the participation of providers. The application process was perceived to be overly burdensome and providers did not understand why the rating system focused on certain elements, like the relationship between sound business practices and improved quality of care. There were also issues with inconsistent messaging between the internal state staff and contracted TA providers.

In addition, there were issues specific to the state's rural areas. First, the lack of internet access and the geographic isolation of many of the state's rural providers and families made it difficult to communicate with them about the TQRIS system. Equally important, the lack of capacity in many rural areas provided no incentive for providers to participate as they were fully enrolled and "the only game in town." The state has attempted to address these issues by creating a "message map" for more consistent and streamlined communication (see Appendix B-1.2) and re-evaluating the incentive structure. RTT-ELC dollars will allow us to address these issues in a more comprehensive as will be discussed as part of our high-quality plan for this section.

At the same as the state was examining TQRIS participation, it also contracted with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) to conduct an evaluation of the program standards that defined the tiers of the TQRIS. The evaluation looked at the TQRIS indicators in relation to national standards, the latest research on the most important indicators of program quality, and what promotes child outcomes. The research identified both the strengths and weaknesses of the TQRIS from a program assessment perspective and provided evidence-based recommendations to make the tiers more measureable and to more meaningfully differentiate program quality levels. The key recommendations were:

1. Include child screening as an indicator in the TQRIS
2. Include fewer structural measures of quality and more process measures, including teacher-child interactions
3. Create a higher quality threshold for the lower tiers of the TQRIS
4. Develop higher levels to the TQRIS to encourage providers currently in the highest level to continue to improve

The findings from the continuous improvement process conducted as part of AR–BB implementation and the findings of UAMS evaluation provide an excellence point of departure for Arkansas’ next generation TQRIS, discussed in detail below

(B)(1)(a) TQRIS based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include—

1. Early Learning and Development Standards;
2. A Comprehensive Assessment System;
3. Early Childhood Educator qualifications;
4. Family engagement strategies;
5. Health promotion practices; and
6. Effective data practices;

Arkansas Better Beginnings (AR–BB) tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS) addresses all components listed in the RFP, albeit limited in some areas. The goal of the state’s high-quality plan is to enhance these dimensions of the TQRIS, better align them to national standards of quality, and create a stronger and clearer progression in each area. Table (B)1-1 summarizes the indicators used for the AR–BB Program standards by each area. The table also includes what the state is proposing to include as indicators in the revision of the TQRIS. The process for the revision is discussed in detail in the high-quality plan and upcoming sections of the proposal.

Table B(1)-1. Current and Proposed AR– BB Indicators.

TQRIS Component	Current Arkansas Better Beginnings Indicator	Proposed Arkansas Better Beginnings Indicator
Early Learning and Development Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development on Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) • Daily schedule addresses all areas of ELDS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development on ELDS • Approved curriculum and formative assessment that are linked to ELDS • Daily schedule address all areas of ELDS

Comprehensive Assessment System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessment using <i>Environment Rating Scales (ERS)</i> • Formal state assessment on ERS with score factoring in the determining of TQRIS level • Provider maintains a portfolio for child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening • Formative assessment • Environmental Rating Scales • Assessment of teacher–child interaction • <i>Program Administration Scale/Business Administration Scale</i> • Sharing assessment results with parents
Early Childhood Educator Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrators and staff must be member of the Traveling Arkansas’ Professional Pathways (TAPP) Registry • Increasing and specific professional development requirements linked to TAPP • Increasing training annual training requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrators and staff must be member of (TAPP) Registry • Staff credentialing and degree requirements • Stronger, increasing professional development requirements • Increasing annual training requirements
Family Engagement Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Program Administration Scale</i> indicators focused on Family Partnerships • Strengthening Families Framework activities and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear progression of family engagement indicators (see Section C(4)) • Emphasis on cultural and linguistic sensitivity and appropriate practices • • Emphasis on inclusive practices for children with

		<p>disabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening Families activities and training • Involvement in program governance
Health Promotion Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information with families on ARKids First (state child health insurance program) • Documentation of education or medical care plans for children, as applicable • Share information on medical homes • Share information on nutrition and physical activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information with families on ARKids First (state child health insurance program) • Documentation of education or medical care plans for children, as applicable • Share information on medical homes • Screening and referral process
Effective Data Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TQRIS data management system • Online <i>ERS/PAS/BAS</i> assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use data from assessment to individualize instruction and aggregated for program improvement • To the extent practicable, screening, formative, environmental, and teacher–child interaction assessments conducted on-line and cloud-based • Link TQRIS data to Early Childhood Data Collection

		System with linkages to Arkansas Longitudinal Data Systems (K–12) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data management system • Fully online TQRIS tool management system • TAPP registry linked to TQRIS
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b. Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and

As a poor state where market forces make it difficult for some programs and providers to achieve a high level of quality, it is important to meet programs and providers where they are in an effort to incrementally foster improvements. As discussed in Section (A), Arkansas takes seriously the support of its early care and education programs and providers and knows it must work within the context of the early care and education community’s specific needs, strengths, and vulnerabilities. The quality levels in the current AR–BB TQRIS reflect this perspective. As previously mentioned, the creation of the state’s TQRIS was guided by the goal of creating a pathway to a basic level of quality defined by Quality Approval. As such, quality levels were created that were lower than the standards set by the state’s Quality Approval accreditation in order to move programs into the TQRIS system and to create a pathway for programs to, at the very least, reach what was then the Quality Approval accreditation. From this perspective, the state was successful, with a 28-percent increase in program participation in the TQRIS. The next step is now to increase the expectations for quality as defined by levels of the TQRIS.

Clear and Measurable Standards that Meaningfully Differentiate Program Quality

Although Quality Approval accreditation was based on a single criterion (*ERS* score), the current TQRIS introduced a broader set of indicators to define quality. As discussed above, indicators related to important dimensions of program quality from basic staff qualifications to family engagement were included. Commonly used assessment instruments like the *Program Administration Scale (PAS)*, the *Business Administration Scale (BAS)*, and the *Environment*

Rating Scales—with documented evidence of reliability and validity indicators—were incorporated into the TQRIS scoring to support the measurement of as many of the indicators as possible.

The “block system” for scoring the TQRIS that is used—where a program has to meet every program indicator to achieve that level—allows for a clear differentiation of the quality tiers. In this way, the program quality indicators of the AR–BB TQRIS are clear, measurable, and differentiate quality. At the same time, some of the important program indicators are based on scores from the *PAS*, *BAS* and *ERS*. For example, family engagement practices are incorporated into the TQRIS through the “Family Partnerships” subscale of the *PAS* assessment. As such, family engagement practices do not have their own unique that counts toward the TQRIS level, but are instead incorporated into an overall *PAS* which is then use to define the level of quality. Although this approach makes the measurement of family engagement more psychometrically sound, it reduces the “weight” of family engagement in influencing the final quality score. Revisions to the TQRIS will work to use measures with strong estimates of reliability and validity of the program indicators while ensuring that those indicators that are particularly impactful to child outcome (like *CLASS* scores) will be heavily weighted to determine the TQRIS level.

Standards reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards

Currently, AR–BB clearly only measures a modest level of quality. As part of the evaluation of AR–BB conducted by the University of Arkansas of Medical Sciences (UAMS), the current TQRIS levels were aligned with the following national standards:

- National Association for the Education of Young Children
- National Association for Family Child Care
- Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities
- Council of Accreditation (after school program standards)
- Head Start Program Performance Standards
- Strengthening Families
- ERS and CLASS

As expected, the evaluation found that the implemented AR–BB Levels 1–3 do not reflect nationally recognized standards. As a result, high quality-programs in the state—like

Head Start and ABC—“top out” quickly. In other words, these programs easily reach the highest level of quality measured on the TQRIS with no pathway or incentives to higher quality; this issue has significant implications. As discussed in Section (A), the ABC program does an excellent job closing the gap between at-risk children and their higher-income peers, but a sizeable gap still remains. As such, it is important that ABC programs continue to strive for quality improvements. The high-quality plan below proposes a revision of the state’s TQRIS that creates additional higher level tiers as recommended by the UAMS study that are aligned to national standards of quality and incorporate teacher–child interactions.

c. Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.

As discussed in Section (A), the state has revised its minimum licensing standards, which are scheduled for implementation on July 1, 2014. These standards exceed the current requirements for Level 1 in AR–BB. Once the minimum licensing standards are finalized, AR–BB will use them as the foundation tier for the revised TQRIS.

High-Quality Plan for TQRIS Revision

The RTT–ELC grant offers a significant opportunity to enhance the current system. Arkansas was one of a small number of states invited to participate with BUILD on the Topical Learning Table—*Revising Standards Learning Table*—webinar series. For the past two years, a team of stakeholders identified as the Arkansas Better Beginnings Leadership Team has been engaged in strategic planning around TQRIS enhancements. The team has worked with the national Technical Assistance from Center for Quality Improvement, has solicited stakeholder input, looked at new staffing patterns within DCCECE to support implementation

The Project 2 (B)(1) Table gives a detailed account of the state’s high-quality plan. The following is a brief summary of the information presented in the table.

Goals

- B.1.1: Revise current AR–BB TQRIS, align with national standards of excellence, and validate
- B.1.2: Adopt new minimum licensing standards⁴⁰ equivalent to TQRIS Level 1

Activities

⁴⁰ New Minimum Licensing Standards are drafted and will be put up for public comment (January–March 2014); therefore projects are related to finalizing the standards.

- Activities B1.1a through B1.2e (located in the second column) apply to these goals.

Responsible Agency

- The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, who is currently responsible for the implementation of AR–BB, will be responsible for this project.

Timeline

- The revision will take place in the first 18 months of the grant to leave ample time for the validation study (see the fifth column in the table for detailed information).

Budget

- The budget for the revision and alignment of the TQRIS is included in the entire Project 2 (Revising, Aligning, and Validating AR–BB) budget of \$15,114,163. For more specific details, please reference the budget narratives and tables.

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

Project 2 (B)(1) High-Quality Plan for the Revision and Alignment of Arkansas' Better Beginnings Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System					
Goal	Activity	Responsible Agency	Agencies Supporting and Advising	Timeline	Measure of Success
B1.1 Revise, align and validate the Arkansas Better Beginnings Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	B1.1.a. Create an AR–BB programs standards and alignment advisory committee	DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Developmental Disabilities	B1.1.a. thru B1.1.d January 2014 – December 2014 B1.1.d thru B1.1.o January 2015 – September 2015	AR–BB program standards finalized by 6/2015
	B1.1.b. Review research and draft additional program components and tiers				
	B1.1.c Align AR–BB with national and state standards				Public awareness campaign in place by 7/2015
	B1.1.d. Submit for review by national experts and organizations				
	B1.1.e Revise based on expert review				Monitoring and Evaluation System in place by 9/2015
	B1.1.f Pilot (covered in detail in B.5)				
	B1.1.g. Conduct public/stakeholder forums for input and recommendations				
	B1.1.h. Revise based on public/stakeholder input				

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

	B1.1.i Economic Impact Study for Legislature				
	B1.1.j Cost Study for DCCECE				
	B.1.1.k Draft final standards and post for public comment, review by the Early Childhood Commission and AR Legislature				
	B.1.1.l Hire publisher for layout and publication of Standards and translate AR–BB standards into Spanish				
	B.1.1.m Conduct Public Awareness Campaign and Disseminate to early childhood practitioners				
	B1.1.n Align all program monitoring and assessment processes				
	B1.1.o Cross train all monitors and assessors on aligned program standards				

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

B.1.2 State adopts new minimum licensing standards⁴¹ equivalent to TQRIS Level 1	B1.2.a Cost Study for DCCECE	DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Developmental Disabilities	January 2014 – June 2014	Cost study provided to DCCECE
	B1.2.b Economic Impact Study for Legislature				Economic Impact study ready to provide the legislature
	B1.2.c Review by the Early Childhood Commission and AR Legislature				Review and Feedback from ECC and AR Legislature
	B1.2.d Develop RFP for the development of policies, procedures, and criteria for inter-rater reliability of DCCECE Licensing Staff to minimum licensing/Level 1 Standards				RFP developed, released, applications scored, funding provided, final policies for inter-rater reliability
	B1.2.e Develop training and train DCCECE licensing staff to reliability on revised minimum licensing/Level 1 Standards				Training developed and provided to 100% of licensing staff

⁴¹ New Minimum Licensing Standards are drafted and will be put up for public comment (January-March 2014); therefore projects are related to finalizing the standard.

(B) (2) Promoting participation in the State’s Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

a. All publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs in the TQRIS

Arkansas has a high-quality plan to maximize participation of all publically funded early care and education programs in AR–BB. The state’s goal is full participation (over 95 percent)⁴² of all publically funded programs regardless of the source of public funding. The goal is achievable and the path to success in Arkansas is somewhat unique compared to other states—and perhaps even a bit less challenging. The state’s consolidated governance structure and the strong relationship between the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education and the Head Start State Collaboration Office has produced a scenario in which a large majority of programs participating in the state’s TQRIS are currently Head Start and state-funded pre-kindergarten programs. Nearly 68 percent of programs currently participating in the state TQRIS are in one of these two program categories.

Overall, 833 of state’s 2,572 licensed programs (33.9 percent) are participating. Although this percentage is driven primarily by the high participation rates of Head Start and ABC pre-kindergarten programs, other types of publically-funded programs participate, albeit on a smaller scale. The specific participation rates of publically funded programs are (see also Table B(2)(c)):

1. **State-funded preschool programs:** Early learning and development programs funded by the ABC pre-kindergarten program are required to participate in the state’s TQRIS. Accordingly, of the 418 ABC pre-kindergarten programs in the state, 400 (96 percent) participate in the TQRIS. Those programs not participating are almost completely comprised of programs who have been recently awarded pre-kindergarten funding.
2. **Head Start:** Twelve of the state’s 21 Head Start/Early Head Start grantees have all of their centers participating in the TQRIS, with high participation rates among the other

⁴² Each public funding stream regularly has new programs entering. Given that these programs require some initial start-up time before they begin participation in the TQRIS, we would never attain 100 percent participation at any given time. Therefore, full participation is defined as above 95 percent.

- grantees as well. Overall, 190 of the state's 249 Head Start centers (76 percent) participate in the TQRIS. Head Start centers not participating are those that have been recently taken over by the Community Development Institute (CDI) of Denver, as well as the centers of new grantees that were recently awarded a Head Start grant through the Designation Renewal System (DRS) competition that took place last year.
3. **Part B, Section 619 and Part C of IDEA:** IDEA Part C funds 24 programs for infants and toddlers with special needs, 12 of which (50 percent) are participating in the TQRIS. IDEA Part B, Section 619 funding is not used to fund separate early childhood programs in the state, but instead is used to deliver services for preschool children with special needs primarily through state Head Start and pre-kindergarten programs. As such, programs funded through the Part B, Section 619 are participating at rates similar to those of Head Start and state pre-kindergarten programs.
 4. **Title I of ESEA:** Similar to Part B, Section 619 funding, most Title I funding dedicated to children birth–5 is blended or braided with ABC funding. As such, early childhood programs receiving Title I are also participating at rates similar to those of Head Start and state pre-kindergarten programs. DCCECE has not identified early learning and development funding where Title I is the exclusive fund source, but this will be part of the high-quality plan.
 5. **CCDF Program:** There are 918 early learning and development programs in the state that receive CCDF funding. Of these, 272 programs (29.6 percent) are currently participating in the state's TQRIS. As such, the focus of our high-quality plan, discussed below, will be on increasing the percentage of these programs in the state TQRIS.

Current efforts to increase participation

Arkansas Better Chance

Although required to participate, programs that are new to the state's pre-kindergarten program need initial information and support to connect with the TQRIS system. DCCECE has established a protocol for flagging these new programs for support, scheduling the appropriate trainings, providing one-on-one coaching, and assessing environment quality. This protocol will ensure the timely integration of new state pre-kindergarten programs into the TQRIS.

Head Start

Roughly half of the state's Head Start centers that do not participate in the state TQRIS are under the temporary management of CDI. Typically, this means that the Head Start program has relinquished its grant or has been taken over because of a particularly serious violation of the Head Start Program Performance Standards. Although these programs have serious quality concerns, the state will attempt to engage with the Office of Head Start to start these programs on a path to TQRIS participation. For example, the state will request the federal monitoring reviews for these grantees and work with each grantee to create program improvement plans using the TQRIS indicators as the foundation for the plan.

The remainder of Head Start programs not participating in the TQRIS are centers of new Head Start grantees. Earlier this year, the Community Action Program of Central Arkansas and the Save the Children Federation were awarded Head Start grants in Round I of the Head Start DRS competition. The state will work with regional Head Start Association and the Head Start State Collaboration Office to provide support for the remainder of the Head Start and Early Head Start grantees to help them participate in AR-BB TQRIS within the first year of this RTT-ELC grant by providing any technical assistance that is need as well as peer-to-peer mentoring.

Child Care and Development Fund Programs

In response to the low TQRIS participation rate among programs receiving CCDF funding, the state wrote into its 2012–13 biennial child care plan to the Office of Child Care that it would require programs receiving CCDF funding to participate. The state engaged in the federally required public input process where stakeholders did not express opposition. The Arkansas Early Childhood Commission approved the measure in April of this year and as of October 1, 2013, all newly participating programs in the state's subsidy program are required to participate in the TQRIS and meet a minimum rating of Level 1. Providers currently receiving CCDF funding have a grace period and will be required to enroll by the end of 2015. During the grace period, the State will assist these providers by providing additional funding, coaching and technical assistance to help them attain this goal. The RTT-ELC grant will allow the state the opportunity to intensify this effort.

b. Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high – quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs.

Over the last year, the DCCECE has implemented significant policy changes designed to incentivize provider participation in the TQRIS, maintain and improve the supply of high-quality care, and make quality care more affordable and stable for families with children with high needs.

Redetermination period linked to the quality of the program

First, the DCCECE has linked the length of the redetermination period for child care subsidy eligibility to a program's quality level rating on the TQRIS. Prior to the policy change, a parent receiving a child care subsidy would have to provide proof of income and employment every six months regardless of the quality of the provider. Under the new policy, the higher the provider's rating on the TQRIS, the longer the redetermination period. The new relationship between TQRIS quality level and redetermination period is:

Level 1: Six-month redetermination period

Level 2: One year redetermination period

Level 3: 18-month redetermination period

When the new Levels come online as the result of the TQRIS reforms discussed in B(1), the redetermination period for parents attending those programs will be two years.

Changes to eligibility policy to mitigate "cliff effect"

DCCECC has also made changes in eligibility policy that allow families with children with high needs to continue to receive a subsidy as a family's income increases. Like changes to the redetermination period policy, these changes are designed to promote the continuity of care that is so important for establishing strong relationships between provider, parent, and child. Prior to the policy change, the eligibility threshold to receive a child care subsidy in Arkansas was 60 percent of the State Median Income (SMI)—a little over \$38,000 for a family of four—and any change in income above that threshold would cause an immediate loss of the subsidy. This "cliff effect" is particularly hard for families to maintain continuity of care, and antithetical to the early learning and development goals of DCCECE. Accordingly, although the current eligibility threshold to initially receive a child care subsidy remains at 60 percent of SMI, the state now allows families to retain eligibility until a family's income reaches 85 percent of SMI (\$49,735 for a family of four).

Reimbursement rates that incentivize quality

The state has recently revised its reimbursement rate structure for providers to incentivize quality, the provision of care for special populations of children (e.g., infants and toddlers) and care that is of low supply in the state (overnight and weekend care). The rate structure is based on a per child rate that is equivalent to the preschool rate currently being offered to providers who are in Level 1 of the state's TQRIS (which is at about the 50th percentile of current market rate). To incentivize providers to offer these forms of care, and to make that care more affordable to parents of children with high needs, the state has created an incentive rate structure outlined in the table below. Thus, for example, a provider who offers care at the highest level of the new proposed TQRIS will receive a subsidy reimbursement that is 60 percent higher than the base rate. The incentivized rate puts the reimbursement over the 75th percentile of the current market rate.

New reimbursement rate structure

Reimbursement Incentive Category	Multiplier to the base rate
Infants	19 percent
Toddlers	10 percent
Evening care	10 percent
Weekend Care	20 percent
Better Beginnings Level 1	Base rate – no incentive
Better Beginnings Level 2	10 percent
Better Beginnings Level 3	20 percent
Better Beginnings Level 4 ⁴³	40 percent
Better Beginnings Level 5	60 percent

**Multiplier percentages are tentative pending the release of the Tiered Reimbursement System (Quality Incentive Program)*

⁴³The reimbursement rates for Levels 4-6 have been developed in anticipation of the reforms that will take place to the state's TQRIS as discussed in B(1).

State tax policy that supports families using child care

As discussed in the timeline in Section (A), through legislation in 1993, Arkansas established a refundable credit for taxpayers who place their children or dependents in a facility that has a certified child care program (Act 1268). The credit is equal to twenty percent of the Federal Child Care Credit. The *Arkansas Child Care Credit* program is different from the Federal Child Care Credit program because it is refundable, and any excess over the tax liability can be returned as overpayment. To claim the early childhood credit, a qualified individual must meet all the requirements for claiming Federal Child Care Credit and have incurred child care expenses at an Arkansas facility certified by AR–BB at Level 2 or 3. Each December, a list of facilities certified at Better Beginnings Level 2 and Level 3 is submitted to the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration, Individual Income Tax Division. The table below outlines the number of families and the amount of tax credit assessed for those families.

Number of families who placed their children beginning at a Level 2 program and above and accessed the Arkansas Early Childhood Credit for years 2010, 2011, and 2012.		
Year	Families	Paid for tax credit
2010	961	\$105,627
2011	1281	\$137,110
2012	1189	\$127,584 *

c. Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by type of Early Learning and Development Programs. Data Table (B)(2)(c)(1)

Given the baseline numbers, the current interventions, and high-quality plan, the state has set the ambitious, yet achievable targets for participation in TQRIS. As one can see in the data table below, the state will maintain the high participation rates of the state's pre-kindergarten program and gradually increase the participation rate of Head Start and Part C programs to full participation by the end of the grant period.

With the regard to the goals set for programs receiving CCDF, the state expects a fairly large increase in percentage of program participating in 2014 as a result of rule changes

discussed above related to newly entering programs. The state expects full participation by the end of 2015 as those programs who were given a grace period until January of 2015 will be required to participate.

Performance Measures for (B)(2)(c): Increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System											
Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of programs in the State	<i>Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</i>									
		Baseline (Today)		Target-end of calendar year 2014		Target -end of calendar year 2015		Target- end of calendar year 2016		Target- end of calendar year 2017	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State-funded preschool <i>Specify:</i>	418	400	96	400	96	400	96	400	96	400	96
Early Head Start and Head Start⁴⁴	249	190	76	195	78	205	82	225	90	240	96
Programs funded by IDEA, Part C	24	12	50	15	62	21	87	23	96	23	96
Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619	NA	NA		NA		NA		NA		NA	

⁴⁴ Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

Performance Measures for (B)(2)(c): Increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System											
Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of programs in the State	<i>Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</i>									
		Baseline (Today)		Target-end of calendar year 2014		Target -end of calendar year 2015		Target- end of calendar year 2016		Target- end of calendar year 2017	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	NA	NA		NA		NA		NA		NA	
Programs receiving from CCDF funds	918	272	30	602	46	1,257	96	1,257	96	1,257	96
<i>Baseline data provide actual figures. Data for pre-kindergarten, Head Start and CCDF is generated from the DCCECE Section of DHS data warehouse. Part C information provided by the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services data manager through a survey of the 24 Part C programs.</i>											

High-Quality Plan

Arkansas understands that although it may require programs to participate in the TQRIS, the state will have to provide significant supports to programs to help them participate and take full advantage of the supports embedded in the system. As such, the plan involves developing a needs assessment tool for programs that is aligned to the levels of the new TQRIS developed under B(1). Publically funded programs will be required to participate in the TQRIS needs assessment.

The needs assessment data will be analyzed and the tailored supports will be provided based on the needs assessment including training, coaching, cohort mentoring. The state Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies will be expand and funded to provide specific support to family child care providers. The state will also enhance the *Arkansas Better Beginnings* YouTube Channel that will provide information to programs. (See Project 2 (B)(2) Table for full list of initiatives, timeline and costs).

The Project 2 (B)(2) Table gives a detailed account of the state’s high-quality plan. The following is a brief summary of the information presented in the table.

Goals

- B.2.1:All publically funded programs will participate in the state’s TQRIS

Activities

- Activities B2.1a to B2.1c.v (located in the second column) apply to this goal.

Responsible Agencies

- The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, who is currently responsible for the implementation of AR–BB, will be responsible for this project.

Timeline

- Full participation, as defined in this section, will occur by the end of the grant period (for more details see the fifth column).

Budget

- The budget for expanding the TQRIS to all publically funded programs is included in the entire Project 2 (Revising, Aligning, and Validating AR–BB) budget of \$15,114,163. For more specific details, please reference the budget narratives and tables.

Project 2 (B)(2) High-Quality Plan for the Revision and Alignment of Arkansas' Better Beginnings Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System					
Goal	Activity	Responsible Agency	Agencies Supporting and Advising	Timeline	Measure of Success
B2.1 Enroll all publicly funded programs that serve Children with High Needs in AR–BB⁴⁵	B2.1.a All non-participating voucher, ABC, Head Start, Part B, Part C programs complete a needs assessment to determine what support is needed	DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Developmental Disabilities	June 2014 – July 2016	Needs assessment completed for 100% of non-participating voucher, ABC, Head Start, Part B, Part C programs Expanded opportunities for training, mentoring, TA and coaching Increased support for programs with online content, PD and support for curricula
	B2.1.b Based on needs assessment results, offer tailored support that includes training, coaching, technical assistance i. Expand Quality First Coaching ii. Expand Cohort Mentoring iii. Support CCR&Rs to support Family Child Care iv. Expand no-cost-to-program TA/consultation as requested by facility v. Expand Administrator Quality Initiative				

⁴⁵ As of January 2014, all CCDF contracts with providers require participation in AR–BB at Level 2 within two years.

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

	<p>B2.1.c Additional Supports to all Programs including Market-Based Programs</p> <p>i. Expand online video resources for AR–BB YouTube Channel</p> <p>ii. Conduct monthly webinars</p> <p>iii. Provide Better Beginnings Buzz</p> <p>v. Provide ongoing no-cost-to-program Professional Development</p> <p>vi. Expand Curriculum Implementation Project</p>				
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(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs

(a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring program and trained monitors

Arkansas Better Beginnings (AR–BB) monitors programs serving infants and toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children and includes center-based and family child care providers. As discussed briefly in B(1), Arkansas utilizes tools with strong psychometric properties to monitor the quality aspects of early care and education programs. AR–BB currently utilizes three assessment tools:

1. *Environment Rating Scales* (ERS) for center based programs and family child care programs
2. *The Program Administration Scale* (PAS) for measuring various aspect of program administration
3. *The Business Administration Scale* (BAS) for measuring the quality of administrative and business practice

AR–BB certification is valid for 36 months unless a facility changes location or ownership. Facilities requesting a review for a higher level of certification must wait at least six months after the program’s last certification date. Unannounced visits or random checks conducted by licensing monitoring staff that result in an unfavorable review trigger a full-scale reassessment.

An independent observer assesses environmental quality of a program using the appropriate version of the *Environment Rating Scales* based on the type of program and the age of the children (*ECERS*, *ITERS*, or *FCCRS*). Research on these tools has validated the relationship of ERS scores to child outcomes in child care settings, although it is recognized that findings are not always consistent and are generally modest in strength. AR–BB assessors are contracted through Arkansas State University (ASU), have a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education or related field, and three years of experience in early childhood. Assessors are trained by reliable supervisors for inter-rater reliability and the assessment teams attend an annual three-day statewide meeting and monthly or bi-monthly regional meetings to receive updates and address assessment issues. ERS assessments are conducted through the use of PC tablets and web-based software. Supervisors can monitor the assessments, and the feedback review feature of the system increases the accuracy of the reviews and increases efficiency and turn-around time in sending reports to providers for program improvement.

ASU assessors also conduct assessments on administrative and business practices using the *PAS* for center-based programs and *BAS* for family child care programs in tandem with the *FCCERS*, *ECERS* and *ITERS*. The *PAS* measures 25 items clustered into 10 subscales and a 7-point Likart scale for center-based programs. Subscales include: Human Resources Development, Personnel Cost Allocation, Center Operations, Child Assessment, Fiscal Management, Program Planning and Evaluation, Family Partnerships, Community Resources, Marketing and Public Relations, Technology, and Staff Qualifications. The *BAS* is designed to assess business practices for family child. The *BAS* includes 37 indicator strands clustered in 10 items including: Qualifications and Professional Development, Income and Benefits, Work Environment, Fiscal management, Record Keeping, Risk Management, Providers Parent Communication, Community Resources, Marketing and Public Relations, and Provider as Employee (if the provider employs assistants). Reliability and validity estimates for the *PAS* and *BAS* are provided in the Appendix B-3.1 and B-3.2.

PAS and *BAS* assessors must be certified. These assessors complete a rigorous four-day reliability training. After training, assessors complete two *PAS* assessments and submit the assessments to the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National University in Wheeling, Illinois. If the completed assessments demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the scales and scoring, the assessor is certified. Assessors must be recertified every two years. The same procedure is followed for *BAS* assessors. In addition to certification, DCCECE expects assessors to participate in annual refresher trainings and teleconferences. In May 2010, *PAS/BAS* assessors began using web-based software for their assessments, which includes an assessor reliability tool. Similar to the *ERS*, the supervisor feedback feature increases the accuracy of the reviews, and increases efficiency and turn-around time in sending reports to providers for program improvement. Finally, *PAS* and *BAS* assessors are required to demonstrate inter-rater reliability according to the recommended schedule of the publisher—every three months or every 10 reviews, whichever occurs first.

As discussed in Section B(1) the revision of the state's TQRIS will include a measure of teacher–child interactions for the upper tiers. As part of its high-quality plan for the revision, the state will review the most recent tools available for this purpose, including the revised and validated *ECERS–III* and the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)* for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. As part of the state's review of new tools to measure teacher–child

interactions, it plans to participate in a pilot of the *ECERS-III*.⁴⁶ The Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill has submitted a proposal to the Institute of Education Sciences, US Department of Education for *Refining the Large Scale Psychometric Assessment of the ECERS-III*. The purpose of the project is to refine and validate the *ECERS-III* so that it better measures program quality across the full range of indicators seen in early childhood programs and improves its predictive power with respect to child outcomes. Arkansas State University, Childhood Services was asked to participate in this study along with the New York City Department of Education, Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and A+ Education Limited, United Kingdom. ASU Childhood Services will collaborate with the DCCECE to collect *ECERS-R* and *ECERS-III* classroom scores from 200 preschool classrooms. In addition, for a subset of programs we will work with FPG to gather child outcome data on a sample of children in each program. It is anticipated that the study will start in the spring of 2014.

In addition to the work conducted that is specific to monitoring outlined in the high-quality plan, Arkansas plans to conduct a review and alignment of all existing program monitoring and assessment systems. The purpose will be to reduce redundancy and duplication of monitored items and increase efficiency and inter-rater reliability in assessing early childhood programs. The use of technology will help streamline some processes, improve the accuracy of the data gathered, and save time for facilities and DCCECE staff when it comes to collecting and reviewing data. An example of this will be tracking all staff through the TAPP system. Providers will have no need to keep up with certificates of trainings and DCCECE staff will be able to review this fully online system instead of going through personnel folders by hand. In addition, Arkansas will also remove the requirement for all AR–BB programs to submit a reapplication every three years. The provider portal expansion and creation of the AR–BB online application will allow providers to update information as it changes, which will reduce the need to resubmit an entire application packet for information that may not have changed. They will also institute a checklist that will include those indicators not covered in the assessment tools. DCCECE monitoring staff will use these checklists for annual inspection, which will be part of one of their

⁴⁶Note that this is not included in the high-quality plan because we are acting as a pilot site to FPG. The state does not have responsibility for the pilot, it is of no cost to the state, and the state does not have control of the timeline.

regular monitoring visits (minimum licensing inspections happen unannounced three times per year).

During the review and alignment process, the project team will identify those quality indicators requiring review in order for a program to maintain their quality rating. Once the newly revised AR–BB standards are in place, program staff will work together in year two to build a more coordinated and reliable system for monitoring programs. It is proposed that the new structure of DCCECE staff will allow for greater capacity to conduct complete inspections of facilities. Staff from Child Care Licensing, the ABC Program, and any additional staff reassigned to this role for monitoring, will be provided with an training overview on all evaluation tools used, along with regulatory and child development training. One coordinated monitoring system will be used to track all licensing monitoring and assign assessors for AR–BB evaluations throughout the state. This will involve extensive policy and procedural changes, new the development of new trainings, and the means to ensure it is a reliable system. Licensing is already exploring using Key Indicators for monitoring visits, which will be a part of this new system.

(B)(3)(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents

Outreach efforts to date

Since the launch of the Better Beginnings program in 2010, Arkansas has been intentional in its outreach and communication efforts to inform families and the general public on the importance of high-quality early learning experiences for children, particularly those with high needs. Communication and outreach efforts have been led by a state-level communications team who developed a high-quality communication plan and have contracted with a communications vendor. The AR–BB Program has invested in research of each of its target audiences, specifically families of children receiving vouchers those who pay for child care independently. This information has guided outreach efforts in identifying the most effective approaches to reach and inform families of children with high needs throughout the state.

Outreach efforts have included multiple forms of media including: public speaking engagement; paid media campaigns; a website; television, radio and print advertisements that focus on informing the general public and families with young children about the importance of high-quality care and increasing awareness of the AR–BB Program as a resource for families. Program managers have arranged speaking engagements with community organizations

throughout the state. These engagements have been utilized as opportunities to educate consumers and business owners about the importance of high-quality early education. These opportunities were also used to identify stakeholders and advocates across the state.

A yearly progress report has been developed for AR–BB, which focuses on the growth of the program and the number of children served throughout the state. This report is specifically designed for communication with legislators and other stakeholders. The report provides data that can be used for continued funding and support from statewide stakeholders.

Messages about AR–BB were guided using a communications tool called the MessageMap. This tool was developed by the communications vendor and was developed with input from Better Beginnings' stakeholders throughout two half-day sessions. Program directors, internal staff, communications staff, and additional stakeholders utilized data from research groups to craft a MessageMap that helped communicate with each of the target audiences. The MessageMap was used to communicate with several target audiences identified by Better Beginnings. The development of the MessageMap requires that specific messages are designated for each audience. Using this tool ensured that every advocate for the program spoke with the same messages to each audience. After development, the DCCECE invested in MessageMap training for each division staff member. This training prepared all staff, from kitchen cooks to the CFO on how to communicate with each target audience about AR–BB. The MessageMap is still used as a communications tool for Better Beginnings today.

It should be noted that several of the tools used to promote AR–BB have been recognized by the Public Relations Society of America and the International Association of Business Communicators. This list of recognized tools include: the Better Beginnings website, progress report, television spot, radio spots, print ad series and the Better Beginnings launch event.

Increasing awareness of Arkansas Better Beginnings

In order to raise the awareness of and demand for high-quality child care, a media campaign including television, radio, and print ads, as well as direct mailings introduced Better Beginnings to the general public. The call to action in all materials sent the targeted audiences to the Better Beginnings website. Components of the media campaign were sustained during 2011 and 2012 to further raise Better Beginnings' visibility to providers in addition to creating demand for star-level programs among families. Materials that providers can use to educate their clientele about Better Beginnings have been made available as well. Media is regularly evaluated to

determine the best medium for the message and social media has been incorporated to reach both providers and families.

In addition, Better Beginnings has invested in efforts to directly reach out to providers. Program directors and Better Beginnings staff have attended several provider focused events since 2010, including the AECA conference and the ASU Early Childhood Services Conference. These opportunities have been used to communicate the importance of high-quality early learning to providers. Better Beginnings has also used these events to survey providers, which helps guide the program's communication efforts. Provider testimonials have also been a part of these events. DCCECE staff sat down with more than 50 providers over the past few years to record their thoughts on the QRIS. These video testimonials have been used for recruitment and support from providers on the state who are not Better Beginnings certified. Our research has shown that peer review is the strongest recruiting tool for Better Beginnings.

Program administrators developed a television spot that focused on the importance of quality early learning and introduced Better Beginnings to the families in Arkansas. The television spot was supported with radio and print ads that focused on educating families about the importance of quality early learning and established AR–BB as a resource for families.

Currently, the public can access information on all licensed programs through the DCCECE website. Key information included the AR–BB rating, licensing history—including dates of recent licensing monitoring visits—any citations or violations for health and safety, and any substantiated complaints. Searches for licensed programs can be delineated by type of program including: Head Start/Early Head Start, ABC, voucher, and programs that provide care during non-traditional hours including evening and weekend care.

The Better Beginnings website provides information on child development and listings of resources for families, including a directory for locating child care. The communications team uses analytics to track the information that is most useful to visitors of the site and plans/updates the content accordingly. This assures that Arkansas continuously improves its communication efforts to educate families every time they come back to the site. A new website will be launched in October 2013. The website will have a fresh new look, and is built with responsive design. Given the rural nature of much of the state, Arkansas recognizes that there are a large number of families across the state that only have internet access through their mobile phone or a tablet. This type of website allows full function of the site, no matter the device is being used. The site

will be built-out in phases, with more resources and materials to come over the next year for families, educators, and the community.

Outreach efforts to increase participation in QRIS

Early learning and development program administrators plan to educate all providers in the state on the importance of quality early learning. Outreach will include a social media campaign that recognizes Better Beginnings providers as they achieve a one star status and will continue to recognize achievements as a quality program. State research shows that peer recommendation is the most influential method of recruitment. These testimonials are used in social media and digital outreach.

The State will continue to educate licensed providers across the state in spreading the message about the importance of quality early learning. These messages are communicated at statewide events through speaking engagements, peer level interaction, and communication through the AR–BB newsletter the *Better Beginnings Buzz*.

Outreach efforts to educate consumers about QRIS

Better Beginnings will continue to focus on family education regarding the importance of quality early learning. This will include a *Pinterest* profile and print ads that uses center-based learning examples to educate parents the importance of children’s play for fostering meaningful development. In addition, Arkansas has utilized a series of print ad for family communication. This series has allowed us to educate families, drive traffic to our website, and track the content that our audience finds most useful and important. This strategy has allowed for a more focused message to the family audience, which has helped increase enrollment in quality programs throughout the state. New print ads in seven parent-focused publications will also support the education of families in the state. The message of these print ads will focus on the importance of quality early learning experiences and will direct families back to the Better Beginnings website for more information on the subject. These print ads include quick response codes that allow the communications team to evaluate the effectiveness of each message and track the content on the website that families find most valuable.

The Arkansas Communications Team will continue to evaluate its outreach efforts in terms of accessibility, quality, and effectiveness of information provided. These ongoing monitoring efforts will continue to inform Arkansas’ communication and outreach efforts.

High Quality Plan

The Project 2 (B)(3) Table gives a detailed account of the state’s high-quality plan for increasing monitoring and expanding outreach of the TQRIS. The following is a brief summary of the information presented in the table.

Goals

- B3.1: Increase monitoring within the TQRIS
- B3.2: Expand outreach of the TQRIS

Activities

- Activities B3.1a to B3.2c (located in the second column) apply to this goal.

Responsible Agencies

- The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, currently overseeing the implementation of AR–BB, will be responsible for this project.

Timeline

- These activities will occur from July 2014–July 2015 (for more details see the fifth column).

Budget

- The budget for increasing monitoring and expanding outreach of the TQRIS is included in the entire Project 2 (Revising, Aligning, and Validating AR–BB) budget of \$15,114,163. For more specific details, please reference the budget narratives and tables.

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

Project 2 (B)(3) High-Quality Plan for the Revision and Alignment of Arkansas' Better Beginnings Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System					
Goal	Activity	Responsible Agency	Agencies Supporting and Advising	Timeline	Measure of Success
B3.1 Increase Monitoring	B3.1.a Develop RFP for the development of policies, procedures, and criteria for inter-rater reliability of AR–BB Ratings	DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Developmental Disabilities; Contractors for DCCECE	July 2014 – July 2015	RFP developed, released, applications scored, funding provided, final policies and documents for inter-rater reliability
	B3.1.b Hire and train staff to reliability to expand valid/reliable assessment using tools identified in the AR–BB system				Increased number of staff trained
	B3.1.c Develop training for DCCECE, DDS, contractual training/coaching staff on AR–BB				Training developed
	B3.1.d Train DCCECE, DDS, contractual training/coaching staff on AR–BB				Increase number of individuals trained to support programs through application process
B3.2 Expand Outreach	B3.2.a Expand Communication Plan to include new TQRIS standards to specifically target families of children with High Needs, specifically families who are in rural areas, have Infants/Toddlers, have children with disabilities, are English Language Learners	DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Developmental Disabilities; Parent and Key Stakeholder Advisory Groups for each target population	July 2014 – July 2015	Increased materials for target populations Advisory groups with parents and key stakeholders for each target population Increased outreach to parents using technology

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

	B3.2.b Assemble advisory groups of key stakeholders to vet the materials developed in B3.2.a				
	B3.2.c Expand resources available using innovative technology (such as in the responsive platform technology for mobile and tablet devices) being used with the current AR–BB system				

(B) (4) Promoting access to high quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs

Arkansas has historically provided a variety of incentives and training supports for all early care and education programs participating in AR–Better Beginnings (AR–BB) to improve the quality of their services. The State will use RTT–ELC funds to expand and build a more coordinated system for the dissemination of bonus awards and financial incentives to increase the number of programs participating in the state TQRIS and continuously improve levels of quality across participating programs.

Currently, Arkansas provides comprehensive support for voluntary TQRIS participation. Supports are available and offered at no-cost to all licensed early care and education programs regardless of location or funding stream—ABC state prekindergarten, Head Start, CCDF programs, licensed child care centers, and licensed and registered family child care programs use these services. These supports are outlined below:

- **Intake.** All new Level 1 AR–BB programs are contacted by a project specialist to identify supports needed to sustain Level 1 and move toward a higher level. The project specialist confers with the program’s administrator and makes a recommendation of supports that would be helpful to the program. Supports may include—but are not limited to—coaching, technical assistance, training, and resource materials. Level 1 programs on a provisional plan are required to participate in quality improvement activities.
- **Quality First Coaching (QFC).** Contracted through ASU Childhood Services, the project provides intensive coaching for licensed facilities that are struggling to consistently meet minimum licensing requirements, with the goal of moving those centers toward sustaining Better Beginnings Level 1. QFC participants must serve (1) infants and toddlers and (2) families eligible for child care assistance. Project coaches work closely with licensing specialists to identify sites that could benefit from the project. Coaches then work with each site for one to two years, individualizing the coaching strategies to meet the needs of each center. The frequency of visits is based on the center’s improvement plan developed by the participant and coach, using data from multiple sources including the participant’s self-evaluation, licensing history, and program goals. Coaches visit each site a minimum of once a month and as often as twice

a week. Coaches also maintain relationships with alumni sites, contacting them quarterly after the sites have transitioned out of the project. The decision was made to focus on centers in order to affect larger numbers of children. With RTT–ELC funds, this project can be expanded to include family-based early learning and development programs.

- **Better Beginnings Cohort Mentoring.** The Cohort Project works with administrators in facilities serving a high percentage of children with needs—particularly those enrolled in the child care subsidy program—with the goal of preparing the facility to move into Level 1 of Better Beginnings. Each cohort of 30 program administrators is coordinated by a representative from the DCCECE Family Support Unit (that handles subsidies) or the Licensing Unit and by the ASU Better Beginnings coaching/technical assistance staff. Cohort activities are tailored to the needs of the group—generally one meeting per month for the first year, with quarterly meetings in subsequent years.
- **Administrator Quality Initiative (AQI).** AQI provides training, coaching, and resources over two years for programs working toward AR–BB Levels 2 and 3. As Better Beginnings levels are added (as described in Section (B)(1)), the project will modify its goals to include training for implementation and sustainability of higher levels. Administrators participating in the two-year AQI participate in an annual leadership seminar (12 clock hours annually), four regional director roundtable sessions (three clock hours each) per year, and monthly coaching sessions with a certified *Program Administration Scale/Business Administration Scale (PAS/BAS)* assessor who has also had training in strengths-based coaching. Coaching sessions include observation visits to Better Beginnings Level 2 and Level 3 facilities. An *ERS* assessment is completed for each site in the fall of the first year and again in the spring of the second year. The *ERS* sample includes one-third of classrooms at each age level served (using *ITERS* for infants and toddlers; *ECERS* for preschoolers, and *SACERS* for school-age children; the *FCCRS* is used for family child care programs). *PAS/BAS* assessments are completed in the winter of the first year and in the spring of the second year. In addition, administrators have access to the three-day seminar *Powerful Interactions: Directors as Coaches* (available to any director who attends the Powerful Interactions Institute, not limited to AQI participants). Powerful Interactions training assists administrators in developing the coaching skills to support staff in implementing high-quality teacher–child interactions

that extend children’s learning. The AQI initiative impacts a diverse set of children and families—of the programs participating in AQI during the past three years, 82% serve CCDF children; 95% serve infants and toddlers; and 71% serve families that speak a language other than English in their home.

- **Curriculum Implementation Project.** This project is contracted through ASU Childhood Services and provides training and coaching for programs implementing a child-centered curriculum including the *Project Approach*, *HighScope*, *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool*, *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos*, and the Arkansas-developed *Adventures in Learning*. Furthermore, the project offers technical assistance on any curriculum approved for use in Arkansas ABC programs. The project will expand to offer necessary supports for implementing high-quality curricula at the proposed higher levels of AR–BB to align with measurement tools specified in the revised version of AR–BB (e.g., *CLASS* and/or *ECERS-III*).
- **Mentoring network for programs that have a higher percentage of children with high needs.** A number of early learning and development programs participating in AR–BB serve children with disabilities. Trainings will be made available at lower levels of AR–BB with focused efforts to train rural programs and family child care providers. See Section (D)(2) for the complete plan for additional training and supports that will be provided to early learning and development programs.
- **Professional Development.** Arkansas funds an array of professional development opportunities at low or no cost to early care and education programs (see Section (D)).

Past and Current Incentives Plan (July 2010-January 2014)

Two types of grants are currently available to all early care and education programs with an AR–BB rating. The first type, Incentive Grants, is used to increase or maintain the quality components of the facility. Incentive Grant amounts are based on a combination of licensed capacities, current AR–BB level, and the number of years spent at that level. Grants are renewable at Levels 1 and 2 for a maximum of nine years (not to exceed six years at either level). Amounts decrease each year that a program remains in a level. Once a facility is certified at Level 3, the Incentive Grant is available annually as long as the facility continues to meet the standards. Expenditures may include staff/substitute’s wages during training, management software, costs for employee benefits, retention and wage bonuses, CPR/First Aid training,

curriculum materials, indoor and outdoor supplies and equipment, family involvement activities, and developmental screening and assessment materials. The Incentive Grants can also be used to off-set costs to programs for achieving higher ratings, such as scholarships to private pay families in the cases where the cost of care is increased. The second type, Professional Development Grants, may be used for professional development, attendance at conferences, CDA coursework, college education and staff compensation.

In the current AR–BB system, amounts for grants decrease as programs progress from entry Level 1 to the highest current level, Level 3. DCCECE based this structure on stakeholder input during the development stages of AR–BB. Child care providers and key stakeholders in the child care field agreed that (1) raising the floor of quality child care across the state should be the highest priority of Better Beginnings, and (2) for most programs the initial “leap” into Better Beginnings would be more challenging than the step from level to level once programs were enrolled in the system.

Table (B)4-1

Current Better Beginnings Incentive and Professional Development Grants

	YEAR1		YEAR2		YEAR3		YEAR4		YEAR5		YEAR6	
	<i>I</i> ¹	<i>PD</i> ²	<i>I</i>	<i>PD</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>PD</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>PD</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>PD</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>PD</i>
ONESTAR³												
CAPACITY1-25	\$1,000	\$500	\$750	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$250	\$500	\$250	\$500	\$250	\$500
CAPACITY26- 75	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$1,250	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$750	\$1,000	\$750	\$1,000	\$500	\$1,000
CAPACITY76+	\$2,000	\$1,500	\$1,750	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,250	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$750	\$1,500
TWOSTARS³												
CAPACITY1-25	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$250	\$500	\$250	\$500	\$250	\$500	\$250	\$500
CAPACITY26- 75	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$750	\$1,000	\$500	\$1,000	\$375	\$1,000	\$250	\$1,000	\$250	\$1,000
CAPACITY76+	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,250	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$750	\$1,500	\$500	\$1,500	\$500	\$1,500
THREESTARS	<i>(renewable annually)</i>											
CAPACITY1-25	\$250	\$500										
CAPACITY26- 75	\$500	\$1,000										

CAPACITY76+	\$1,000	\$1,500
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1. I = Incentive Grant.
2. PD = Professional Development Grant (for CDA and/or other college credit course work)
3. Grants are available at ONE STAR and TWO STARS for a maximum of nine (9) years combined, with a maximum of six (6) years at either level. The incentive grant can be used many different aspects and will have a menu of choices to choose from including:
 - a) Administration – substitutes, software, career service retention awards, etc.
 - b) Learning Environment/Environmental Assessment – curriculum, enhancing learning areas, indoor/outdoor equipment, etc.
 - c) Child Health and Development/Family Involvement Activities –communication supplies, developmental screening materials, etc.
 - d) Other – would have to describe the intended use of funds outside of the three main areas.

Research conducted by The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) indicated that this structure was effective in getting programs into Level 1 of Better Beginnings but had the unintended consequence of deterring movement into higher levels.⁴⁷ Evaluation of grant use from 2010–2012⁴⁸ indicated that most grant funds were spent on classroom materials to help programs achieve higher scores on the *ERS* and on professional development clock hours. Programs reporting that grant funds helped move them to a higher level were significantly more likely to have used funds to purchase curricula.

Revised Incentive Plan (Starting January 2014)

Arkansas is in the process of revising and expanding the AR–BB incentive structure. A new grant system for current AR–BB levels 1–3 will be rolled out January 1, 2014. The new system is responsive to evaluation findings and also takes into account cost models developed by a team of representatives from DCCECE, ASU, and UAMS. To estimate the costs of operation for regulated center-based programs in each level of AR–BB, the team used a *Cost Modeling Tool* developed by Louise Stoney and Anne Mitchell at the Alliance for Early Childhood Finance and customized the model for Arkansas using information from the following sources:

- State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates from the Bureau of Labor Statistics
- State ABC (Pre-Kindergarten) budgets

⁴⁷McKelvey, L., M. Chapin-Critz. (2011). Child Care Provider Survey Report. McKelvey, L., M. Chapin-Critz. (2011). Arkansas Directors Qualitative Survey Report. McKelvey, L., M. Chapin-Critz. (2012). Engaging Family Child Care. McKelvey, L., M. Chapin-Critz. (2012). Better Beginnings Grant Survey Report.

⁴⁸McKelvey, L., M. Chapin-Critz. (2012). Better Beginnings Grant Survey Report.

- Community-based child care director focus group
- DCCECE administrative data
- CCR&R review
- Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families
- Results of the cost model support increasing financial supports to programs at higher levels. With RTT–ELC funds, Arkansas will augment the budget planned for the January 2014 revision of Levels 1-3 incentives and later introduce incentives for new higher levels (see Table B(4)-2).

The new incentive package is strongly focused on rewarding early care and education programs that serve children with high needs outside of Head Start and state ABC pre-kindergarten programs. It also provides financial support to programs. Additions to the incentive package include:

- Tiered reimbursement with differential voucher pay for programs starting at Level 2 or higher.
- An infant-toddler/rural care bonus paid to programs in \$5000 grants (in addition to the higher reimbursement differential) will help close the gap between the actual cost of infant-toddler care and what programs receive from the state; it is anticipated that this will make more slots in quality programs available to infant and toddlers. Early care and education programs eligible for these awards include high-quality (Level 3 or higher) center-based or family child care programs that wish to either create or increase infant/toddler capacity in their programs. Funds can be used to help programs attain indoor and/or outdoor learning areas.
- Quality awards to the facility for each level increase to Level 3 or higher made within 2 years.
- Guaranteed eligibility for DCCECE-backed loans. The DCCECE administers funds established to support the development and expansion of child care facilities in the state. With these funds, the state of Arkansas acts as a guarantor for child care providers who otherwise would not qualify for the loan at the provider's selected lending institution. The total amount of the loan request is determined by the business needs of the provider. If funding is approved, the bank issues the loan and the state guarantees—in case of default—to reimburse the bank for 80% of the outstanding principle balance, up to a

maximum of \$25,000. In other words, the state of Arkansas takes a role similar to that of a co-signer on the loan, but only for the amount established in a guarantee agreement with the bank.

- Memberships in a new online platform for shared services. Goals for the platform are:
 1. To lower costs of providing high-quality care by linking small early care and education programs to a national pool of purchasers. The pool negotiates discounts on food, supplies, and services such as credit card and payroll processing,
 2. To provide tools and templates that support good business and management practices (e.g. downloadable templates for budgets, human resource forms, and parent handbooks).
 3. To connect programs with information and community forums that support upward movement in the TQRIS.
- Scholarships for college coursework and CDA assessments for individuals employed in a Better Beginnings rated program, and conference/association fees for employers.
- Staff retention grants—Programs can apply for a grant of \$500 to support implementation of a TA-approved staff retention plan. Staff members at AR–BB facilities will develop Individual Professional Growth Plans (IPGPs) based on evaluations, classroom observations, etc. (described in Section (D)). Plans might include pursuit of college credits, workshop-based trainings, online professional development or coursework, attainment of credentials (such as CDA) or a combination. Bonus awards will be offered with the expectation that the funds will be used to implement staff development plans. This will allow Arkansas to help guide the use of funds toward retaining qualified staff in the early childhood field.
- Limiting some free state-funded professional development courses to rated programs.
- Limiting some free resources, such as nutrition programs and screeners, to rated programs.

TABLE B(4)-2**Arkansas Better Beginnings Incentive Package for 2014**

Level 1 (Licensing)	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Grants & Backed Loans				
	- Start up equipment or materials with business plan and TA approval ¹ (1 Year Eligibility)	- Start up grant with business plan (1 Year Eligibility) - Staff Retention Grant - DCCECE Loan Eligible ² - Quality Award Eligible ^{3,4}	- Start up grant with business plan (1 Year Eligibility) - Staff Retention Grant - DCCECE Loan Eligible ² - Quality Award Eligible ^{3,4}	- Start up grant with business plan (1 Year Eligibility) - Staff Retention Grant - DCCECE Loan Eligible ² -Quality Award Eligible ^{3,4}
Voucher Rates effective October 1, 2013				
- Standard voucher rate	- Voucher + pay differential	- Voucher + Enhanced pay differential	- Voucher + Pro pay differential	- Voucher + Expert pay differential
Infant/Toddler Bonus^{3,4}				
		- Per child bonus rate	- Per child bonus rate	- Per child bonus rate
Scholarships				
	- for association dues and/or conferences fees - for college coursework - for CDA assessment	- for association dues and/or conferences fees - for college coursework - for CDA assessment	- for association dues and/or conferences fees - for college coursework - for CDA assessment	- for association dues and/or conferences fees - for college coursework - for CDA assessment
Free or Discounted Resources				
- ASQ - ASQ:SE	- ASQ - ASQ:SE - NAPSAC - INDEX - 145 Adventures in Learning Books	- ASQ - ASQ:SE - NAPSAC - INDEX - 145 Adventures in Learning Books - TIPS	- ASQ - ASQ:SE - NAPSAC - INDEX - 145 Adventures in Learning Books - TIPS - Work Sampling	- ASQ - ASQ:SE - NAPSAC - INDEX - 145 Adventures in Learning Books - TIPS - Work Sampling
Priority Enrollment in Professional Development				
- Basic Package	- Enhanced Package	- Enhanced Package	- Pro Package	- Expert Package
Membership in Shared Services				
	Shared Services Basic membership	Shared Services Enhanced membership	Shared Services Enhanced membership	Shared Services Enhanced membership

¹Number of children served 1-25 = up to \$1500; 26-75 = up to \$2500; 76+ = up to \$3500²State of Arkansas acts as a guarantor for child care providers who otherwise would not qualify for the loan at the provider's selected lending institution.³One-time grant equal to amount of start-up grant to the facility for each level increase to Level 3 or higher within 2 years.⁴Paid as a bonus for Infant/Toddler (0-36 months) expansion to serve families whose family income is 200% of poverty or less regardless of voucher status.

Independent of this RTT–ELC proposal, Arkansas had already planned 2014 implementation of these new incentives using CCDF funds: tiered voucher reimbursements, scholarships, the shared services platform, start-up grants, staff retention grants, and access to free trainings and resources. We will use RTT–ELC funds to augment the Level 1–3 incentives. To motivate program movement into levels above 3, we will use RTT–ELC funds for additional staff retention grants, quality awards, and infant/toddler bonuses. To encourage individual practitioners to increase their education, we will also use RTT–ELC funding to provide scholarships as described in Section (D).

b. Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high – quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full –day, full- year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and

Arkansas already has many supports in place to help families of children with high needs access high-quality early care and education programs. For example, the state partners with the USDA’s Child and Adult Care Food Program. The Special Nutrition Unit within DCCECE works with contractors, providers, and families to complete income eligibility forms for each child. All children enrolled in the Food Program receive meals/snacks at no cost in their early care and education programs. Another state support is wraparound care for state pre-K using CCDF funds. Authorizations for out-of-school time and summer care enable families to continue working. As described below, Arkansas is planning additional ways to make accessing high quality care easier for families.

CCDF Application Process and Parent Co-Pays

Arkansas plans to improve the application process for CCDF assistance. Currently, Arkansas uses a paper application process. Applicants have the option to submit an online application, but without a way to submit the supporting documents, applications are considered incomplete. Implementing an entirely electronic application process will make the process more economical. A paperless system will include a complete online application process in which a data system would determine eligibility based upon the information entered into the system by the family. Supporting documents will be uploaded during the initial face-to-face meeting with the Program Eligibility Specialist. Although RTT–ELC funds will not be used to support this

migration, it is notable that this systemic change will increase access to services for families with children with high needs.

Once families are approved for CCDF assistance, DCCECE Program Eligibility Specialists play a key role in educating parents of children with high needs. These professionals have the opportunity to share resource information with parents—including information about the Child Care Resource & Referral agencies in their areas. If transportation is a barrier expressed by the families requesting early care and education assistance, the Program Eligibility Specialist can help families meet interview requirements by allowing for alternate meeting locations and or flexible work times to accommodate working families requesting assistance. Arkansas will use RTT–ELC funds to increase training for Program Eligibility Specialists in using AR–BB to help educate families about quality child care and to help them select high-quality early care and education programs. To encourage families to use CCDF assistance in higher quality early care and education programs, the State will use a new co-pay scale. Family co-pays will be lower in programs that have higher AR–BB ratings.

Improving Continuity

The state is restructuring the length of time for CCDF authorizations and plans to make authorization periods longer for children enrolled in AR–BB rated programs. Plans for existing tiers 1–3 are already underway. With the addition of higher tiers into AR–BB we project the following authorization periods:

- Level 1 facilities: 6-month authorization (Current and proposed)
- Level 2 facilities: 1-year authorization
- Level 3 facilities: 18-month authorization
- Level 4 facilities: 2 year authorization
- Level 5 facilities: authorization lasting until the child is of age for kindergarten or until the lifetime limit of 60 months, whichever comes first.

The new structure will increase the continuity of care for children with high needs receiving assistance and help high-quality programs maintain slots for infants and toddlers. It is anticipated that early care and education programs will be more open to accepting vouchers knowing they will have secure payments in place.

Early Learning Collaboratives

The partnership and collaborative concept is not new, though the idea is reemerging as an effective way to promote coordinated investments in early childhood by leveraging resources and

expertise. Private resources are not intended to supplant public investment in the healthy development and school readiness of young children, but they can be used to spur action and seed innovation across the state.

Arkansas currently has successful local early learning collaboratives in four communities in different areas of the state. Two of the collaboratives developed because of an interest in early learning by a local government official (mayor and county administrator), the third through the local Chamber, and the fourth was established by a nonprofit early care and education program. Although each collaborative is unique, all seek to connect early childhood educators (birth to third grade), families, and community members. Using the local collaborative concept, Arkansas plans to support the establishment and growth of Early Learning Collaboratives in 12–30 communities throughout Arkansas.

We will base our work on the *Smart Beginnings* model in Virginia. The Arkansas Child Care Resource and Referral Network will convene a design team of 10–15 representatives from the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission, DCCECE, private foundations, and business and community leaders. Their task will be to advise the state on the best approach in leading, coordinating, and supporting local Early Learning Collaboratives (ELC). The state will work to build a network of Collaboratives with common goals, local solutions, and parent involvement. The framework will include the following components.

- Infrastructure – ELCs will work in partnership with state governance. The initiative will provide opportunities for competitive grants and technical assistance to local collaboratives to build capacity and infrastructure in local communities for delivery of quality early childhood programs.
- Coordination – ELCs will act as a hub— a single point of information for resources and supports to advance the quality of early childhood care and education programs within the designated geographic area.
- Communication – ELCs will promote vigorous and persistent public awareness initiatives to build a clear understanding of the long-term economic and social benefits of investment in high-quality early care and education.
- Innovation – The network will stimulate proactive, innovative approaches to early care and education that produce successful results and spotlight best practice models. Through technical assistance and learning communities the ELC will encourage best practices statewide.

Arkansas will offer grants to local communities to help them build strong systems to support high-quality early care and education programs for young children. The grants seek to bring together local stakeholders to design and develop a comprehensive infrastructure at the local level to expand, enhance and support efforts beyond the state’s TQRIS initiatives and to sustain efforts beyond the resources made available through RTT–ELC funds. Resources will be available to match local dollars for work already in place. In communities that are in the early stages of development, planning grants will enable communities to pursue activities such as conducting a community needs assessment, developing an early childhood strategic plan, or building interagency collaborations. A request for proposal (RFP) will be issued and 1.5 million in grants awarded. Priority will be given to proposals in rural communities and for activities focused on the needs of infants and toddlers in their communities for the following:

AR–BB Partnership Grants. Competitive grants will be awarded to 4-6 communities, totaling \$600,000 for a two year period to AR–BB partnerships. A 50 percent match by grantees will be required. The local partnerships will use these grants to plan, develop, establish, expand or improve the quality of early childhood care and education programs for young children.

AR–BB Planning Grants. For communities that are in the early planning stages and are not yet ready to implement a partnership grant, we have allocated \$900,000 to fund 8–15 partnerships in the state. These grants will enable communities to pursue activities such as conducting a community needs assessment, developing an early childhood strategic plan, building interagency collaboration, developing community engagement campaigns, and jump-starting initiatives for high-quality services and care (e.g., transition to kindergarten activities, family engagement, physical activity and nutrition activities). Each community will receive a 2-year grant and is required to contribute a 10 percent match in year one and 25% match in year two.

During the 2011 Legislative Session, House Bill 1916 was passed allowing the DCCECE to use interest from the Arkansas Child Care Facilities Loan Guarantee Trust Fund to “...support an early childhood foundation or public-private partnership.” These funds would be used to continue the work of the ELC network following the completion of the RTT–ELC grant period.

c. Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--

1. The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered quality Rating and Improvement System; and

2. The number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. Data Table (B)(4)(C)(1) and (2) Targeted Performance Measure

Given the baseline numbers, the current interventions, and high-quality plan, the state has set the ambitious, yet achievable targets for participation in TQRIS. Arkansas has multiple strategies for raising quality already in progress that will be significantly enhanced with RTT funding. RTT–ELC funding will lead to a higher rate of programs in the higher quality levels of AR–BB. As seen in Tables (B)(4)(c)(1) and (B)(2)(c)(2), the state will maintain the high participation rates of the state’s pre-kindergarten program and gradually increase the participation rate of Head Start and Part C programs to full participation by the end of the grant period.

With the regard to the goals set for programs receiving CCDF, the state expects a fairly large increase in percentage of program participating in 2014 as a result of rule changes related to newly entering programs as discussed above. The state then expects full participation by the end of 2015 as those programs who were given a grace period will be required to participate.

High-Quality Plan

The Project 2 (B)(4) Table gives a detailed account of the state’s high-quality plan for promoting access to high-quality early care and education programs for children with high needs and promoting parent access to TQRIS information. The following is a brief summary of the information presented in the table.

Goals

- B4.1: Promote access to high-quality programs for children with high needs
- B4.2: Promote parent access to TQRIS information

Activities

- Activities B4.1a to B4.2b (located in the second column) apply to this goal.

Responsible Agencies

- The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, who is currently responsible for the implementation of AR–BB, will be responsible for this project.

Timeline

- These activities will be ongoing throughout the grant period (for more details see the fifth column).

Budget

- The budget for promoting access to high-quality programs through the TQRIS and promoting parent access to TQRIS information is included in the entire Project 2 (Revising, Aligning, and Validating AR–BB) budget of \$15,114,163. For more specific details, please reference the budget narratives and tables.

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

Project 2 (B)(4) High-Quality Plan for the Revision and Alignment of Arkansas' Better Beginnings Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System					
Goal	Activity	Responsible Agency	Agencies Supporting and Advising	Timeline	Measure of Success
B4.1 Promoting Access to High Quality ELDP for Children with High Needs	B4.1.a Create RFP to complete a cost model of revised AR–BB system specific to the Levels for each program type	DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Developmental Disabilities	July 2014 – July 2015	RFP developed, released, applications scored, funding provided, final cost model for each of the program types completed
	B4.1.b Using cost analysis, redistribute rates for tiered reimbursement for revised AR–BB system for each program type				Revised tiered reimbursement rates for each program type determined
	B4.1c Implement Infant/Toddler bonus rate				Processes and policies created and implemented by DCCECE
	B4.1.d Implement Revised Incentives Packages				Processes and policies created and implemented by DCCECE
	i. Quality awards ii. Eligibility for DCCECE-backed loans iii. Membership in shared services online system iv. Priority enrollment in professional development v. No-cost-to-program screeners and				Expanded opportunities for training, mentoring, TA and coaching Training developed and increased number of Family Support Workers trained to support foster parent choose quality programs for the children in their care

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

	formative assessments				
	B4.1.e Voucher programs supported as described with activities from Goal B2.2				
	B4.1.f Develop training and train Family Support Workers (DCFS/Foster Care) on educating parents about quality options				
B4.2 Promoting Family Access to High Quality ELD	B4.2.1a Develop AR-BB Training for DCCECE Program Eligibility Specialists	DCCECE	CCR&R network, RTT grant manager, subcommittee of the Early Childhood Commission	September 2015 – March 2017	<p>Training requirements written. All Specialists trained.</p> <p>New CCDF contract terms established, released, and implemented</p> <p>Design Team in place</p> <p>Location for meetings identified</p> <p>Facilitator identified</p> <p>3-4 meetings held. Collaboratives plan written. RFP developed</p> <p>Awards granted</p> <p>Quarterly reports by grantees reviewed by RTT grant manager.</p> <p>Site visits made 2 X per year.</p>
	B4.2.2 Explore restructuring authorizations for children served through CCDF				
	B4.2.3a Select representatives to be members of the Early Learning Collaboratives "Design Team"				
	B4.2.3b Locate a foundation to co-host the Design Team planning meetings				
	B4.2.3c Secure a facilitator (paid for with current CCDF budget through CCR&R management grant)				

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

	B.4.2.3d Develop Collaboratives plan and develop and disseminate RFP				Info posted on BB website Progress report complete
	B.4.2.3b Collect and review Applications				
	B.4.2.3c Monitor grantee progress				
	B.4.2.3d Disseminate info on grantee communities (paid for with increase in outreach (the Communication Group)- RTT budget)				
	B.4.2.3d Report outcomes and use money from interest on Guaranteed loan fund to reissue RFP to support collaboratives and/or create additional ones.				

(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Tiered quality rating and improvement systems (TQRIS) represent a systemic approach to assess, improve and communicate quality in early and school age care and education programs. Because TQRIS are a relatively new strategy, there are a limited number of evaluations examining the overall effectiveness of this approach and identifying key components of a TQRIS that leads to meaningful changes in quality. Initial studies in North Carolina and Oklahoma provided evidence that the QRIS in these states were capable of making valid differentiations between different levels of quality.⁴⁹ A few studies conducted in Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Colorado, and Tennessee investigated the effect of QRIS on program quality over time. Although these studies generally found positive changes in quality, not all differences reached statistical significance.⁵⁰ Given this limited amount of research on the validity of TQRISs, Arkansas seeks to contribute to this emerging body of research with a rigorous, high-quality validation study of its TQRIS. The purpose of this study is twofold: 1) to ensure that Arkansas' TQRIS can be used as a meaningful mechanism to lift the quality of early care and education programs across the State, and 2) to pioneer research that will inform the field of the early care and education practice and policy.

Arkansas' current and envisioned future practices are characterized by a strong commitment to the quality and effectiveness of the AR–BB TQRIS for promoting optimal development for Arkansas children with high needs. The state has demonstrated this commitment in the form of ongoing investment in: 1) process evaluations used for continuous quality improvement of our TQRIS and 2) outcomes evaluations to understand the impact of our early learning programs on children's development. These historical demonstrations of Arkansas' commitment to data-driven decision making are described below as the foundation for the proposed validation and outcome studies of Arkansas' revised TQRIS.

Historical Evaluation Efforts

Arkansas has contracted with independent evaluators with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) to provide ongoing evaluation of the AR–BB TQRIS. These projects

⁴⁹Child Trends. (2010). *Compendium of quality rating systems and evaluations quality rating systems (QRS) assessment project, 2008-2011*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

⁵⁰Ibid.

have examined each of the indicators in AR–BB in relation to empirical research that demonstrates which features of early care and education quality are most predictive of child outcomes. These projects have also provided ongoing process evaluation used for continuous quality improvement efforts.⁵¹ A 2010 UAMS study prepared for the Division of Child Care and Early Education (DCCECE) provided extensive recommendations on potential improvements to the AR–BB standards and system, which are the foundation for the proposed revisions outlined in Section (B)(1).⁵² The recommendations for TQRIS improvements based on the UAMS evaluation included reducing redundancy in the family engagement elements, increasing fidelity in *PAS* implementation, designating teacher–child ratios as TQRIS criteria, incorporating measures of process quality, including child screening as a criterion, addressing lower levels of quality by creating a cut-score on the *Environment Rating Scale*, and creating higher TQRIS levels. The DCCECE has already responded to the recommendations from the initial study by changing licensing requirements including establishing teacher–child ratios and providing training to ensure that the *PAS/BAS* are implemented with fidelity. As part of ongoing work, the state is working toward revising family engagement elements, incorporating screening, and reviewing the levels and criteria of the TQRIS. AR–BB will continue to be revised with RTT—ELC funding as discussed in Section (B)(1).

In addition to research and evaluation specifically regarding ongoing improvements to AR–BB, Arkansas has also demonstrated a strong commitment to data-driven decision making through funding rigorous evaluations of our early learning programs. For example, Arkansas contracted with independent evaluators at the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University to complete two longitudinal studies of the impact of the Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) state prekindergarten program.^{53,54} Arkansas also takes advantage of state data, combining information on ABC attendance and the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS), which is maintained by the Arkansas Research Center (ARC). Annually, Arkansas uses state data to assess the Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) scores of children

⁵¹ McKelvey, L., Chapin-Critz, M., Johnson, B., Bokony, P., Conners-burrow, N., Whiteside-Mansell, L. (2010). *Evaluating Arkansas' Path to Better Child Outcomes*. University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Hustedt, J. T., Barnett, W. S., Jung, K., & Thomas, J. (2007). *The Effects of the Arkansas Better Chance Program on Young Children's School Readiness*. National Institute for Early Education Research: Rutgers, NJ.

⁵⁴ Jung, K., Barnett, W. S., Hustedt, J., Francis, J. (2013). *Longitudinal Effects of the Arkansas Better Chance Program: Findings from First Grade through Fourth Grade*. National Institute for Early Education Research: Rutgers, NJ.

who did and did not participate in ABC to verify ongoing program impacts on children's school readiness across each of the state-funded ABC programs. This history provides evidence of the high level of rigor and commitment to data-based decision making that will be applied in future research efforts, such as the proposed validation and outcomes studies.

Approach to Evaluation and Validation

Arkansas has a high-quality plan to design and implement rigorous evaluations of the relationship between the ratings generated through TQRIS and children's outcomes. Through RTT–ELC funding, Arkansas will: 1) validate that standards and levels of AR–BB meaningfully differentiate program quality (Validation Study) and 2) ensure standards and levels in AR–BB relate to improved child outcomes (Outcomes Study). Arkansas will also ensure that any additional program standards are linked to literature demonstrating an empirical relationship between quality standards and child outcomes, and will be subjected to expert review. New standards will also be reviewed to examine the measurement strategy and the psychometric properties of any new proposed tools.

As outlined in the timeline in the opening Summary of Section B, the draft standards for the TQRIS in Arkansas will be finalized by August 2014, followed by a Validation Study in Phase III (September 2015–August 2016) and a Outcomes Study in Phase IV (September 2016–August 2017) completed by an independent evaluator. The studies will be designed to ensure Arkansas' TQRIS has strong psychometric properties such as construct validity (the items measure what they are intended to measure); inter-rater reliability (two assessors looking at the same program come to the same conclusion about the rating); sensitivity in the levels of TQRIS (the rating system can detect relatively small differences in program quality); and ultimately predictive validity (higher scores on TQRIS mean better child outcomes). These studies will provide evidence of these psychometric properties and help meet the ultimate goal of ensuring that the TQRIS can be used as a tool for lifting the quality of early care and education programs in a way that will meaningfully impact the learning and development of Arkansas' youngest children.

In order to prepare for these research efforts, the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission will ensure that all stakeholders will be included in the design and development of the research. Early Education and Care programs will be consulted regarding study implementation to ensure that the information collected is useful to programs, can be used to improve program quality, that existing data and information collected by programs for other purposes are integrated with study

data, and that the implementation of the study does not interfere with daily program operations or disrupt care for children and families.

Validation Study

The Validation Study in Phase III (from September 2015–August 2016) will ensure that the standards are operationalized appropriately, the weighting of the different elements is correct, the cut-points between levels are meaningful differentiations of quality, and elements such as the state’s Early Learning and Developmental Standards are fully and appropriately integrated into the program standards and workforce qualification expectations of the TQRIS. The TQRIS standards, levels, and weighting of assessments tied with TQRIS levels will be refined based on the Validation Study results prior to the implementation of the Outcomes Study.

The research questions for the TQRIS Validation Study are as follows:

1. Do TQRIS levels operationalized by Arkansas reflect true differences in quality in *structural features* (regulatable components of early care and education settings thought to be the foundation of quality care such as teacher–child ratios and group size, staff education or credential, and regulations for physical space, such as square foot per child); and *process features* (interactions that directly involve the child such as instructional activities and materials presented to children, behavior management, and teachers’ responsiveness or sensitivity to a child’s needs) for each type of care within TQRIS Standards (infant/toddler, preschool, school age, and family child care programs)?
2. Are the weights and/or cut-scores for assessments used by Arkansas to differentiate the number of points awarded to a program at the higher levels adequate to predict true differences in program quality with regard to both structural and process quality features?
3. Which program and staff characteristics (e.g., program type, initial staff qualifications, wages and benefits) relate to upward mobility within the TQRIS?

Outcomes Study

The Outcomes Study in Phase IV (September 2016–August 2017) will specifically evaluate the degree to which the standards and levels are valid and the predictive power of different tiers in terms of improved child outcomes. If substantial changes were warranted (i.e., TQRIS levels did not meaningfully predict child outcomes, an iterative process would ensue in which revisions were made and validation and outcomes studies were conducted. Research questions for the outcomes study include:

1. Are there gains in children's learning and development (defined as growth from fall to spring) on standardized measures for children in programs participating in TQRIS compared to children in non-participating programs for each of the types of care represented in the TQRIS standards (infant/toddler, preschool, school age, and family child care programs)?
2. Are gains in children's learning and development greater across increasing levels of quality for each of the types of care represented in the TQRIS standards?
3. Are particular elements of the TQRIS system more predictive of gains in the learning and development of children?
4. Does family engagement vary across levels of program quality as indicated by TQRIS level attainment for each type of care represented within the TQRIS?
5. Independent Evaluator for Studies

Independent Evaluator for Studies

Arkansas will develop an RFP for an external evaluation which will be executed by the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE). For all implementation efforts for the Validation and Outcomes studies of our TQIRS, Arkansas will develop an RFP and contract with external evaluators to design and implement rigorous research methodologies. Although methodologies differ based on the research question, funding applications will be evaluated based on the strength of the proposal, including:

1. Carefully implementing a sampling strategy guided by a statistical power analysis which is designed to represent geographical regions of the state, program types, and quality levels;
2. Assessing program quality indicators by trained and reliable external observers who will be following carefully designed observation protocols that include indicators at the teacher, classroom, center, and program levels;
3. Measuring child outcomes and growth across domains of development with measures that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and have adequate psychometric properties. Outcomes should include measurements across the Essential Domains of School Readiness and the sample of children should be representative of Arkansas' population and include children with high needs and dual language learners. Child data should be collected via carefully designed assessment protocols by trained external assessors; and

4. Employing advanced statistical methods, such as Hierarchical Linear Modeling, which permits the modeling of nested data (children within classrooms within programs), to obtain empirical evidence indicating relationships between quality and child outcomes.

The Arkansas Early Childhood Commission will create an evaluation task force, which will draw from the pre-existing Arkansas Pre-K Research Alliance—a group of early childhood educators, policymakers, researchers, and providers from each of the different types of early learning and development programs and other stakeholders—specifically devoted to examining and applying research related to improving the quality and effectiveness of early care and education in Arkansas. This review panel will also include four to six institutions of higher education or research groups that will serve as a resource to the external evaluation team(s) that will provide assistance in research design and development as well as execution of the evaluation, such as supporting the sampling framework and assistance with program selection and participation. The task force will also include representation from DCCECE, the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission, the Arkansas Head Start Collaboration Office, and the Arkansas Department of Health’s Division of Developmental Disabilities Services.

The proposed evaluation efforts that will be supported with RTT–ELC funding will provide Arkansas the opportunity to make ambitious changes to the TQRIS and to validate levels against program quality and child outcomes. Once the system is in place, ongoing evaluation of the levels can be sustained with existing resources. All data collected in Arkansas’ TQIRS will be linked to the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) to allow an ongoing ability to use data effectively. According to the Data Quality Campaign’s 2011 Data for Action survey, Arkansas has met 10 of 10 essential elements required to establish the state’s capacity to use data from the SLDS. State data on children with high needs served through CCDF and ABC funding are currently linked to the SLDS. With the upcoming changes (January 2014) requiring all programs serving children with high needs receiving CCDF funding to participate in TQRIS, information about the early learning environment of all children who receive state funding for early learning programs will be included in the SLDS (see Section (E)(1) for more details). This robust dataset and Arkansas’ history of implementing effective data practices demonstrates Arkansas’ capacity for ongoing data-driven decision making to continuously improve its TQRIS.

In addition to the comprehensive Validation and Outcomes studies outline above, the evolution of AR–BB as a result of this process will be documented by an independent researcher throughout the grant process to inform a detailed case study of effective early childhood systems

reform. This process will document the effect of the innovations on program quality, children's outcomes, and systems reform. This report and its findings will be widely shared with the early learning field and other states to inform their work.

High-Quality Plan

The Project 2 (B)(5) Table gives a detailed account of the state's high-quality plan for validating the TQRIS. The following is a brief summary of the information presented in the table.

Goals

- B5.1: Conduct rigorous validation and outcomes studies

Activities

- Activities B5.1a to B5.1c (located in the second column) apply to this goal.

Responsible Agencies

- The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, who is currently responsible for the implementation of AR–BB, will be responsible for this project.

Timeline

- The validation study will be completed from September 2015–August 2016. The outcomes study will occur during September 2016–August 2017 (for more details see the fifth column).

Budget

- The budget for conducting the TQRIS validation and outcome studies is included in the entire Project 2 (Revising, Aligning, and Validating AR–BB) budget of \$15,114,163. For more specific details, please reference the budget narratives and tables.

Project 2 (B)(5) High Quality Plan for Validating Arkansas' Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System					
Goal	Activity	Responsible Agency	Agencies Supporting and Advising	Timeline	Measure of Success
B.5.1 Validation and Outcomes Studies	<p>B.5.1.a Issue RFP for evaluator and conduct evaluation</p> <p>B.5.1.b Contract with a researchers to provide review of proposals</p> <p>B.5.1.c Create Evaluation Resource Team</p>	DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services	<p>September 2015-August 2016 for Validation Study</p> <p>September 2016-August 2017 for Outcomes Study</p>	<p>Well-evaluated, successful evaluations that validate the content of the TQRIS for discriminating quality and for differentially predicting child outcomes that use appropriate research strategies including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carefully implemented sampling strategy guided by a statistical power analysis which is designed to represent geographical regions of the state, program types, and quality levels 2. Program quality indicators assessed by trained and reliable external observers who will be following carefully designed observational protocols that include indicators at the teacher, classroom, center, and program levels 3. Child outcomes and growth assessed across domains of development with measures that are appropriate, reliable, and valid across development for Children with High Needs, special needs, and who are English language learners also collected by trained and reliable external assessors following carefully designed assessment protocols 4. Advanced statistical methods to obtain empirical evidence indicating relationships between quality and child outcomes

(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.

a. Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness

Background

Arkansas has a longstanding history as a pioneer and leader in developing and implementing high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards as a strong conceptual foundation on which to build its system of early care and education. For example, the *Arkansas Framework for Infant and Toddler Care (ITC)*; see Appendix A-1.3) was initially developed in 1999–2000. The document was completed in 2002 with the inclusion of companion strategies and activities, making Arkansas the first state to develop early learning standards for infants and toddlers.⁵⁵ Similarly, when the Arkansas legislature passed Act 236 in 1991, requiring curricula frameworks to be developed at the state level for use by local school districts to develop curriculum guides for K–12, Arkansas’ early childhood community viewed this as a prime opportunity to develop their own framework with the purpose of shaping and guiding quality programs in early childhood education and bridging children’s learning experiences from early childhood to K–12. Therefore, the *Arkansas Early Childhood Education Framework (AECE)*; see Appendix A-1.2) was developed in 1995 by a task force of more than 30 educators appointed by the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission. This foundational document was completed, accepted, and published by the Arkansas Department of Education in 1996, and over the next few years, a work group created Benchmarks and a Developmental Rating Scale to supplement the *AECE Framework*. These three essential elements (the Framework, Benchmarks, and Developmental Rating Scale) were combined into one document and published in 1999, making Arkansas one of only ten states to have a document outlining expectations for children’s learning

⁵⁵ Scott-Little, C., Kagan, S. L., Frelow, V. S., & Reid, J. (2008). *Inside the Content of Infant-Toddler Early Learning Guidelines: Results from Analyses, Issues to Consider, and Recommendations*. University of North Carolina-Greensboro and Teachers College, Columbia University. Retrieved from: <http://www.uncg.edu/hdf/facultystaff/ScottLittle/FINAL%20FuLL%20REPORT%20-%202.28.08.pdf>

and development prior to kindergarten entry developed before the year 2000.⁵⁶ Both the *ITC* and *AECE Frameworks* have been updated periodically to keep pace with research and changing best practices in the field.

Arkansas intends to continue serving as a leader in the field of developing and using high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards as a foundation for its early care and education system. Recognizing that standards must change over time to incorporate the advances in brain development research and the changing needs and demographics of the state's children, Arkansas sees the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge grant as an opportunity to revise the states' Early Learning and Development Standards and has a rigorous, high-quality plan to do so. The following sections provide an overview of the current *Frameworks* and the detailed plan put forth to develop a “best-in-class” set of Early Learning and Development Standards and associated supports in order to ensure high-quality implementation and integration within the entire system of early care and education.

Current Early Learning and Development Standards

Currently, Arkansas' Early Learning and Development Standards exist as two separate Framework documents, the *Arkansas Framework for Infant and Toddler Care* and the *Arkansas Early Childhood Education Framework Handbook for Three- & Four-Year-Old Children*. These *Frameworks* do not present expectations for children's development and learning as an isolated list of standards, but rather weave them together with resources to support the developmentally appropriate use of the standards among Arkansas' early care and education community. Like a pyramid, the Frameworks first describe the strong foundational base of “Elements of Quality” that should be present in early care and education programs in order to support children's learning and development. These Elements of Quality include: Relationships, Environment, Health & Safety, Experiences, Diversity, Family, and Strategies that Support Learning.

Building on these foundational supports, the Frameworks next describe expectations for what children should be able to understand, know, and do at different ages across domains that align with the Essential Domains of School Readiness articulated in this grant (see Tables (C)1-1

⁵⁶Scott-Little, C., Kagan, S. (2003). Standards for preschool children's learning and development: Who has standards, how were they developed, and how are they used. Greensboro, NC: Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast.

and (C)1-2). The *ITC Framework* describes children’s developmental progress from birth to age three across the Developmental Strands of Language Development (to learn to communicate), Cognitive Development (to learn to think), Physical Development (to learn to move and do), Emotional Development (to learn about feelings), Social Development (to learn about others), and Self-Concept (to learn about themselves). The expectations for learning and development for three- and four-year-olds build upon these progressions and include the Developmental Strands of Language Development, Cognitive/Intellectual Learning, Physical Development, Social/Emotional Development, and Creative/Aesthetic Learning. For each of the strands in both *Frameworks*, developmental benchmarks are identified and vignettes are provided illustrating various learning strands.

Table (C)1-1 Alignment of 3- and 4-Year-Old Developmental Learning Strands with Essential Domains of School Readiness

Arkansas Early Education Framework		Essential Domains of School Readiness as Defined by Grant Application Criteria
<i>Developmental Learning Strands</i>	<i>Sub-Domains</i>	
Language Development	Language	Language and Literacy Development
Cognitive/Intellectual Learning	Language Arts	
	Mathematics and Science	Cognition and General Knowledge (including early mathematics and early science)
	Social Studies	
Physical Development	Health and Nutrition	Physical Well-Being and Motor Development (including adaptive skills)
	Fine Motor	
	Gross Motor	
Social/Emotional Development	Act Independently	
	Interact Socially	Social and Emotional Development
	Experience Success	Approaches Toward Learning
Creative/Aesthetic Learning	Expression Through Art Forms and Activities	N/A

Table (C)1-2 Alignment of Infant/Toddler Developmental Learning Strands with Essential Domains of School Readiness

Arkansas Framework for Infant and Toddler Care	Essential Domains of School Readiness as Defined by Grant Application Criteria
<i>Developmental Strands</i>	<i>School Readiness Domains</i>
To learn to communicate - Language Development	Language and Literacy Development
To learn to think - Cognitive Development	Cognition and General Knowledge (including early mathematics and early science)
To learn to move and do - Physical Development	Physical Well-Being and Motor Development (including adaptive skills)
To learn about their feelings - Emotional Development	Social and Emotional Development
To learn about other people - Social Development	
To learn about themselves - Self-concept Development	Approaches Toward Learning

Finally, in addition to describing expectations for what children should know and do, at the top of the conceptual “pyramid,” the *Frameworks* provide specific strategies and activities to promote learning and development in each strand. Both general and specific strategies and activities are included, and where possible, follow a sequence of learning. Some of the suggested strategies and activities are specific to dual language learners and children with special needs. Furthermore, the *AECE Framework* includes *The Developmental Rating Scale*, which is based on the five developmental learning strands. For each learning strand, early childhood benchmarks are identified along with examples of skills and behaviors that may be observed during any part of the preschool program in a wide range of activities. This assessment tool is designed to be a practical way of documenting each child’s development over an extended period of time; a tool that can be used to develop a complete picture of individual children in order to plan a program and design appropriate strategies and activities to promote each child’s growth and development; a comfortable way to help parents recognize emerging skills and abilities of their child; and a method of documenting skills and behavior that can be shared with support staff and specialists. Thus, the *Framework*, with its inclusion of formative assessment measures and provision of strategies and activities that are directly aligned with the standards, presents a

cohesive system for promoting the growth and development of children and supporting the developmentally appropriate practices of caregivers and families.

Arkansas has also developed several companion pieces to their Early Learning and Development Standards. For example, to complement the *ITC Framework*, the state has developed *Picture This* scenarios illustrating particular strategies for parents and providers, *Infant-Toddler Family Connections* materials for parents, and a poster summarizing the standards for providers to post within their programs. *Adventures for Toddlers* is a curriculum for providers serving children ages 18 to 36 months on how to plan daily activities using suggestions for the standards; it is available online (www.arkansas.gov/childcare/advfortoddlers/curriculum.html) or on CD at no cost to providers. In order to help programs understand alignment across sets of standards, assessments, and curricula, the state's *Association of Measurements* document crosswalks the infant/toddler standards, the three- and four-year-old standards, *Work Sampling*, the *Ounce Scale*, Head Start performance standards, *The Creative Curriculum*, and the state's Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

Proposed Plan for the Development of New Standards

Arkansas' early learning standards are the foundation of the state's system of early care and education. A clear set of common expectations for what children should know and be able to do at different ages during the early childhood period is essential for system integration and to provide the end goals upon which to focus other elements of the system. Consistent with Arkansas' history as a leader in this area, the state will use this opportunity to create a "best-in-class" set of Early Learning and Development Standards for the state. To meet this commitment, the state intends to revise their current *ICT* and *AECE Frameworks* using the latest research on child development and learning, including the recent work on executive function, to develop a set of research-based, measureable, and culturally and linguistically appropriate early learning standards. Unlike the current standards, the new standards will be conceived and developed as one birth-to-five continuum of development and learning. In addition, the state promises to build on its successful history of implementation by creating a horizontal alignment to the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework and vertical alignment to the state's K–12 and Common Core standards; developing ancillary products targeted toward and adapted for

different audiences, including practitioners and parents; and conducting extensive training on the standards to ensure they are well understood and implemented with fidelity.

This following plan describes the rigorous, inclusive approach that will be used to develop Arkansas' Early Learning and Development Standards, and outlines the supports that will be available to promote successful implementation. The approach was designed to ensure that the final standards are seen as credible and useful to early childhood experts, administrators, practitioners, and parents; that the expectations outlined in the standards are in line with those of state early childhood stakeholders; and, that the standards meet the commonly accepted criteria that define high-quality early learning and development standards. These criteria include that the standards:

1. Address all domains of learning and development;
2. Avoid redundancy and focus only on essential aspects of development and learning;
3. Can be measured;
4. Are developmentally, linguistically and culturally appropriate for all children;
5. Are research-based or otherwise grounded in a strong rationale for inclusion; and,
6. Are vertically integrated with K-12 standards.

These criteria are the benchmarks by which high-quality standards are measured. In the following sections, the steps that will be taken to meet these criteria are described, including the ways in which the state will create a robust public input process.

b. Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness

In their comprehensive set of recommendations for the development of Early Learning and Development Standards, Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow (2010)⁵⁷ describe key decisions states should consider such as they write and revise their standards. Scott-Little et al. also emphasize that decisions made early in the development process can provide clarity on what is being developed, support consistency throughout the document, and help the state formulate commitments and principles that will guide development and use. In line with these recommendations, the state of Arkansas has already given careful consideration to some of these

⁵⁷ Scott-Little, C., Kagan, S.L., & Frelow, V. S. (2010). Early Learning Guidelines Resource: Recommendations and Issues for Consideration When Writing or Revising Early Learning Guidelines. Greensboro, NC: University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

key questions and has outlined a thorough process for developing and implementing a “best-in-class” set of Early Learning and Development Standards for the state. Specifically, Arkansas has given great thought to articulating the purpose of revision and intended use of the Early Learning and Development Standards document; specifying the age range to be addressed within the standards document; and specifying guiding principles, namely that the standards will reflect the needs of all children, regardless of language, culture, or disability. The rationale for each of these key decisions is presented below, followed by a detailed plan for how Arkansas will develop answers to other specific key questions regarding the organization and structure of the standards such as: What age groupings will be used with the standards? What specific domains and subject areas will be addressed by the standards? and What is the structure or number of “levels” within the standards?

Purpose of revision and intended use of the standards. A revision of the state’s Early Learning and Development Standards is at the foundation of the state’s system reform efforts. Since an early learning and development system is driven by meeting the expectations for children that are articulated in Early Learning and Development Standards, there cannot be strong system coordination unless every aspect of the state system agrees on a common set of expectations for what children should know and be able to do at different ages before entering school. As such, the state sees the revision process as a way to help to unite different agencies around a set of common expectations for children; work to ensure that any system reform effort supports children’s progress toward school readiness; and, provide clear benchmarks that can be used by the state’s assessment and data systems to track progress and identify school readiness gaps. At the program level, the standards guide decisions related to curriculum, assessment, and professional development, and provide developmental milestones that program staff can use to talk with families about typical patterns of child development and the progress of their children.

Age range to be addressed within the standards. Arkansas’ Early Learning and Development Standards currently exist as two separate documents, one presenting the standards for children birth-to-three and one presenting the standards for three- and four-year-olds. The state took great care in making the decision regarding whether to revise the standards within the separate infant/toddler and preschool frameworks or to present the revised standards as one progression representing a developmental continuum from birth to age five. Ultimately, the decision was made to move to a single birth-to-five progression, which will allow parents and

practitioners to see the entire continuum of development in one document. This format allows the user to see where a child is developmentally and what the next developmental stage is regardless of the child's age. This point is particularly important for teachers and practitioners working with children with disabilities where a four-year-old may be exhibiting behaviors consistent with those of a two-year-old on certain indicators. With the single progression format, the same document can be used for all children regardless of developmental level, and there is no need to switch between two documents for a child whose development may be significantly delayed or advanced in one or more areas.

Guiding principles of cultural and linguistic appropriateness and inclusion. One of the foremost principles that will guide the development process is that the Arkansas ELDS will honor diverse languages, cultures, and abilities. As described in Section (A), Arkansas is becoming increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse. As such, the early childhood stakeholder community is mindful that young children enter early care and education settings with varying levels of exposure to the English language, which means it will be critical to ensure that the standards are culturally and linguistically appropriate. A major factor in making the standards linguistically appropriate is the explicit guidance that children who are dual language learners should have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability and knowledge in any language. For those components not associated with English language acquisition, the goal is to support a child's ability to learn the underlying constructs articulated in the standards regardless of the language in which the knowledge is expressed. If, for example, a 36-month Mathematics indicator is the ability to "verbally count to ten," a child that counts to ten in Spanish or Marshallese will have met that standard. Special attention will be given to highlighting the importance of supporting English acquisition while at the same time recognizing that a child's home language provides a foundation for learning English, which is consistent with the latest research on children who are dual language learners. During the development process and review, it will be determined whether an English Language Development section for dual language learners should exist as a separate domain or whether this information should be integrated into a domain that addresses aspects of language development for all children.

A special focus will also be devoted to ensuring that the standards are designed to apply to children with disabilities, as well as children who are typically developing. From the onset of this work, we intend to apply a universal design philosophy, designing standards that are

inherently applicable to all children, including those with disabilities. For example, as discussed earlier, the decision to have one birth-to-five continuum rather than two adheres to a universal design philosophy. With this approach, teachers do not have to use a different standards document for older preschool children who may have a significant developmental delay. In addition, it is anticipated that supplemental material (e.g., introductory text and practitioner’s user guide) and training content will be devoted specifically to addressing the use of the standards for children with disabilities. For example, introductory material may explain to caregivers that specific timelines and indicators may need to be adapted for children with disabilities; some children may need more individualized or more intensive instruction than others in order to make progress; and accommodations, such as adaptive or assistive technology may be needed in order for children to participate in learning experiences that promote progress. Equally important, the standards document should emphasize that children should be provided with a variety of ways to demonstrate what they know and can do.

High-Quality Plan for developing “best-in-class” Early Learning and Development Standards

The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE) will be the lead agency on the development of Arkansas’ Early Learning and Development Standards. An Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) Committee will be formed that will be advised by the Head Start State Collaboration Office, the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission, the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, and the Arkansas Department of Education. The Committee will consist of representatives from Arkansas’ higher education, Head Start, child care, K–12, and disabilities communities; and other early childhood stakeholders that represent the state’s increasingly diverse child and provider population. As such, the ELDS Committee will bring together the key state and stakeholder perspectives to ensure that the standards are developmentally appropriate and reflect the needs of all children, regardless of culture, language, disability, or education and care setting.

Phase I of standards development

The standards will be developed using a two-phase approach, each with a robust public input process, with a finalized Birth-to-Five Early Learning Standards document to be completed by December 2014. To manage the work of Phase I, the state will issue a request for proposals (RFP) for a vendor to assist in the development of the standards and to facilitate stakeholder input. The steps taken as part of Phase I will define the overall purpose and structure of the

standards. Phase I will begin with discussions with national experts regarding the criteria that define high-quality standards, as well as issues to be aware of during the development process. In addition to these discussions, Phase I will include a review of Arkansas' current *Frameworks* as well as standards from other states to gather information about different approaches to organizing standards that have been used and the variation existing in the substantive content of other state standards. Given that Arkansas' standards were initially developed well before most other states had standards, this exploratory work will be useful in seeing how other states have answered some of the key questions regarding organization and structure articulated by Scott-Little et al. (2010).⁵⁸

The state will solicit stakeholder input by hosting open forums and broadly disseminating a feedback survey to obtain public input on the point of departure document. The forums and survey will address key questions related to the potential organizational structure of the standards, including the areas of development and learning to be addressed, potential age categories to be used to define the expectations for each area of development and learning, and special considerations for rural children.

Using the public input obtained on the point of departure document, the ELDS Committee and selected external consultant will collaboratively develop an initial draft of the Arkansas birth-to-five standards.

Phase II of standards development

Phase II of the standards development process will consist of a thorough expert review. The goal of this review process will be to ensure that the standards incorporate the latest research on early learning and development and that, from a research perspective, they are appropriate for typically developing children, dual language learners, and children with disabilities. To accomplish this goal, a panel of national experts will be assembled to review the draft of the Early Learning and Development Standards. The panel will consist of experts who specialize in specific domains of development (e.g., emergent literacy, mathematics, executive function) as well as experts who have knowledge of specific populations of children (e.g., dual language learners, children with disabilities, infants and toddlers).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Based on the expert review process, the ELDS Committee will make revisions on the standards document. This revised draft will be submitted for a final round of public input collected through public forums and focus groups open to all aspects of Arkansas' stakeholder community. The input from these forums will be used in the final revisions of the standards document. Given the growing diversity within the state, the standards will be translated into Spanish with input from Latino stakeholders to ensure that the translation maintains cultural and linguistic appropriateness. The state will also work with a design firm to finalize the presentation of the standards in a way that guides professionals and families in their use and understanding of the standards. Arkansas will also develop a variety of supplemental materials to facilitate understanding and implementation of the standards including a practitioner user's guide to the standards, a parent version and family activities based on the standards, a curriculum template, and a "Setting Head Start School Readiness Goals using the Arkansas Early Learning and Development Standards" document.

c. Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics

In order to ensure maximum effectiveness and acceptance of these standards, alignments will be created in order to explain and demonstrate how Arkansas' new Early Learning and Development Standards fit within the context of learning standards of the multiple educational auspices at work across the state such as the K-12 system and Head Start programs. To help providers and parents navigate the different standards, Arkansas will create a standards alignment document to illustrate the strong commonality among the standards and create a common frame of reference so that providers can work collaboratively with families to meet expectations regardless of the funding stream or program setting.

A vertical alignment will be created aligning the final set of Early Learning and Development Standards with the Common Core standards as well as the state's Kindergarten Readiness Indicators and State K-12 standards. This alignment will be used with early childhood practitioners as well as elementary school staff and parents to ensure key adults in the lives of young children can view and develop an understanding of the continuum of learning and development from infancy and toddlerhood to the preschool years to kindergarten and the primary grades and beyond. In their 2003 analysis of states' early learning standards, Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow ranked Arkansas early learning standards as having a "moderate"

degree of linkage to their associated K–12 standards (a ranking between “minimal” and “direct” linkage).⁵⁹ This is an area in which the state believes it can significantly improve through the process of revising the Early Learning and Development Standards. In addition to bridging the standards to K–12 standards, it will also be important that teachers across early care and education settings are working toward common goals in fostering the development and learning of the children they serve. Therefore, the state will also explicitly articulate the horizontal alignment between the revised Early Learning and Development Standards and the federal expectations for Head Start children laid out in the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework*.

A “Working off the Same Page” alignment document will be created (see Appendix A-2.1 for an example from Maryland). The goal of this document will be to align similar developmental and learning constructs across the standards to highlight commonalities, as well as to point out where differences exist. As such, this document should give practitioners and families a better understanding of the significant overlap among the standards as well as an understanding of the developmental trajectory across domains of learning.

The DCCECE will be responsible for this project, with advisory support and resources coming from the Head Start State Collaboration Office, the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission, the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, and the Arkansas Department of Education. The finalized documents will be completed by April 2015.

d. Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated throughout the early learning system; and shared with parents and families along with suggestions for appropriate strategies

Systems Alignment

Arkansas’ current early learning standards, as articulated in the *ITC Framework and AECE Framework*, are foundational to the state’s system of early care and education and are embedded throughout other system components such as Arkansas Better Beginnings TQRIS,

⁵⁹Scott-Little, C., Kagan, S. (2003). Standards for preschool children's learning and development: Who has standards, how were they developed, and how are they used. Greensboro, NC: Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast.

Traveling Arkansas' Professional Pathways (TAPP; the early childhood professional development system), and the state's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. For example, at the upper two levels of the TQRIS, Arkansas requires training in the early learning standards specific to the ages served within the program and also specifies that written daily plans for each group include all areas of development as defined in the *ITC Framework* or the *AECE Framework*. Furthermore, teacher preparation programs in the state incorporate the standards into their courses to promote understanding of the appropriate use and importance of the standards. Given this strong foundation of integrating the standards throughout the early care and education system, this will be a continued goal during and following the revision of Arkansas' Early Learning and Development Standards and the state will work to ensure that there continues to be clear reference to the new standards throughout the Program Standards, AR Better Beginning/TQRIS, and Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Alignment with Curricula and Assessment

Arkansas' current *ITC* and *AECE Frameworks*, which integrate standards, assessment, and learning activities, illustrate the state's strong commitment to linking expectations of what children should be able to know and do to ways to measure progress across the important domains of school readiness and strategies teachers and parents can use to help them achieve these developmental goals. Thus, the new Early Learning and Development Standards will continue to be a foundation for an interconnected system of curriculum and formative assessment. As part of the process of revising the Early Learning and Development Standards, Arkansas will create a curriculum alignment template, which will provide information on how well the different curricula used in the state address the standards, and whether supplemental curricula are needed. Furthermore, Early Learning and Development Standards play a fundamental role in the assessment of young children by specifying developmental goals and expectations. Therefore, the new Early Learning and Development Standards will be closely tied to the development of the Comprehensive Assessment System, particularly the use of specific formative assessments and the selection or creation of a new Kindergarten Entry Assessment system. In both cases, the instruments that are selected will address all aspects of development and learning that are articulated in the new Early Learning and Development Standards.

Family Engagement

Given that a key target audience for Arkansas' Early Learning and Development Standards is parents and families, it is important to consider how to best share the standards with families in a way that engages them to support children's learning and development at home. Therefore, a parent version of the Early Learning and Development Standards will be created, keeping in mind that many parents have little or no understanding of the technical aspects of early childhood research and want simply to understand the typical progression of development and learning; therefore, standards should be in their least technical form and contain narrative text that explains why the development and learning constructs defined by the standards are important, what they are, and how they can be supported at home. Furthermore, family activities will be developed that align with the standards and present recommended strategies of parents and caregivers to support the healthy development and learning of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers and to promote success in school.

Professional Development

In order to ensure that Arkansas' Early Learning and Development Standards are well understood and implemented with fidelity, extensive training and professional development opportunities will be provided to caregivers across the state. The final set of Early Learning and Development Standards will be embedded in Traveling Arkansas' Professional Pathways (TAPP; the early childhood professional development system), and trainings on the standards will be developed with the understanding that participating teachers will come to the trainings with different levels of experience with the standards and working with young children, and varying roles. Thus, a multi-level training approach will be developed that includes: Level I: *Introduction*; Level II: *Using Standards in Your Program: Curriculum, Assessment, and Family Engagement*; and Level III: *Implementing for Outcomes*. Arkansas will also develop online training modules and train-the-trainer sessions that address the Early Learning and Development Standards content.

e. Evidence of State supports to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.

As discussed in the sections above, Arkansas will build off its current Early Learning and Development tools and resources to promote an understanding of and commitment to the standards.

High-Quality Plan

The Project 3 (C)(1) Table gives a detailed account of the state’s high-quality plan for creating, aligning, and providing training on new birth–5 early learning and development standards. The following is a brief summary of the information presented in the table.

Goals

- C.1.1: Create birth–5 early learning and development standards
- C.1.2: Construct horizontal and vertical alignments of new standards documents
- C.1.3: Create supplemental materials
- C.1.4: Provide professional development and technical assistance on standards

Activities

- Activities C1.1a to C.1.4d (located in the second column) apply to this goal.

Responsible Agencies

- The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, who is responsible for the implementation of Arkansas’ current early learning standards will oversee this project.

Timeline

- The finalized early learning and development standards documents will be finalized and implementation will begin in August 2015 (for more details see the fifth column).

Budget

- The budget for developing new early learning and development standards (Project 3) is \$540,000. For more specific details, please reference the budget narratives and tables.

Project 3 (C)(1) High-Quality Plan for Development of Arkansas' New Early Learning and Development Guidelines					
Goal	Activity	Responsible Agency	Agencies Supporting and Advising	Timeline	Measure of Success
C.1.1 Create Birth to Five Early Learning and Development Standards	C.1.1.a. Create early learning standards committee	DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education	Finalized Birth to Five Early Learning Standards Document by December 2014	On-time and on-budget Comprehensive, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate Positive expert review Strong stakeholder support to final standards Process generates energy and excitement for implementation
	C.1.1.b. Issue RFP for vendor to develop standards and facilitate stakeholder input and conduct literature review				
	C.1.1.c. Develop draft birth-to-five standards				
	C.1.1.d Host review sessions with stakeholders				
	C.1.1.e. Revise in light of stakeholder input				
	C.1.1.f. Submit for expert review				
	C.1.1.g. Revise based on expert review				
	C.1.1.h. Host final stakeholder review sessions				
	C.1.1.i Finalize standards				

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

	C.1.1.j Translate Early Learning Standards into Spanish				
	C.1.1.k Disseminate				
C.1.2 Construct horizontal and vertical alignments of new standard documents	C.1.2.a Create “Working off the Same Page” horizontal alignment document with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework C.1.2.b Create vertical alignment document with Common Core and State K-12 standards	DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education	Finalized alignment documents by April 2015	On-time and on-budget Strong horizontal and vertical alignment Standards easily used to set Head Start School readiness goal
C.1.3 Create supplemental materials	C.1.3.a Create curriculum alignment template C.1.3.b Create “Setting Head Start School Readiness Goals using the Arkansas Early Learning Standards” document C.1.3.c Create practitioner users guide to the standards	DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education	Finalized alignment documents by August 2015	On-time and on-budget Head Start program and other stakeholder buy-in Broad utilization by practitioners and families

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

	C.1.3.d Create parent version and family activities based on standards				
C.1.4 Provide professional development and technical assistance on standards	C.1.4.c Hold “launch conference” of standards via telecast hosted by regional facilitators	DCCECE in partnership with AECC	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education	Summer 2015 Finalized documents by August 2015	Participation, feedback from participants, evaluation results On-time and on-budget Broad utilization of training modules
	C.1.4.b Implement multi-level training of the standards Level I-Introduction Level II – Using Standards in Your Program: Curriculum, Assessment and Family Engagement Level III- Implementing for Outcomes				
	C.1.4.c Develop on-line training modules and train-the trainer sessions				
	C.1.4.d Provide free training sessions				

(C)2 Comprehensive Assessment System

Arkansas regards high-quality assessment practices to be a critical component to a comprehensive system of early care and education. Indeed, the National Research Council (2008) states that assessment in early childhood settings, when used appropriately, can be a powerful tool used to monitor individual children’s progress, inform instructional decisions, and as a piece of information used to evaluate program effectiveness.⁶⁰ Within this framework set forth by the National Research Council, Arkansas intends to harness the full potential of a well-developed Comprehensive Assessment System by using it to guide and inform decision making at multiple levels nested within Arkansas’ early care and education system. At the individual child level, robust **screening procedures**, including the use of an innovative **telehealth model pilot**, will be used to identify children who may benefit from referrals and additional special services. Teachers will also engage in **formative assessment** practices, using child data to design future learning experiences that help move the child toward the next steps in development and are tailored to each child’s current developmental level and instructional needs. At the classroom and program level, data will be used in a similar formative manner. Quality improvement is about asking adults to learn how to do things in new ways or to hone their skills, and high-quality assessment data can facilitate the allocation of resources to offer training and supports that most effectively address teachers’ unique strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, another component built into the Comprehensive Assessment System will be measures of **process quality**, including teacher–child interactions and the learning environment, which will be embedded within the Arkansas Better Beginnings (AR–BB) Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) and used to guide program evaluation and improvement efforts. Finally, in addition to the use of assessment data at the child and classroom level, the state will develop a **comprehensive statewide data system** that will allow for the use of a robust, longitudinal dataset of classroom quality and child outcomes at the state level that will be used for programmatic decision making and improvement efforts.

Although Arkansas has many strengths in their current use of assessment, the present landscape of assessment practices in the state resembles a patchwork quilt; there is wide

⁶⁰National Research Council. (2008). In Snow C. E., Van Hemel S. B. (Eds.), *Early childhood assessment: Why, what, and how*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

variability across programs and funding streams in the uses of assessment data, the constructs that are measured, the assessment tools that are used, and the systems in which assessment data are collected. To illustrate, although screening instruments, formative assessments, and process quality measures are already in use within the state, their use is fragmented across program type: screening and formative assessment are utilized in Head Start and Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) state prekindergarten programs; the use of the *Environmental Rating Scales* is required by ABC and the AR–BB TQRIS and used by some Head Start programs; and the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)* (Pianta et al., 2008) is required in federally monitored Head Start programs. The state wishes to build upon the foundations of a high-quality Comprehensive Assessment System that are already in place by expanding the use of assessment to benefit all children, particularly those with high needs, regardless of the program they attend.

In response to the lack of coordination in assessment practices across programs, Arkansas created an advisory committee on screenings and assessment entitled the Arkansas Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Assessment Model (ARCECEAM) Task Force. The committee began meeting in July 2012 with the purpose of researching and identifying appropriate assessments for children birth to age 8, ensuring that the selected assessment would blend well with any existing research-based curriculum that is currently being used in programs and schools within the state, and creating a statewide assessment system to support quality improvement initiatives. The extant work of the task force has established a solid foundation on which to expand and strengthen Arkansas' Comprehensive Assessment System through RTT–ELC funds by implementing the following pillars of high-quality assessment at multiple levels of the early care and education system:

1. **Developmental Screenings:** Ensuring that children with special needs are identified early, so that they may access appropriate resources, through the use of high-quality developmental screening tools *across* early learning programs (ABC prekindergarten programs, Head Start, programs that receive voucher subsidies, and programs participating in AR–BB TQRIS). To support high-quality screening practices, training, technical assistance, and mentoring will be provided to programs.
2. **Telehealth Pilot:** Implementing an innovative model of using distance technologies to connect children and programs in rural areas with professionals such as speech–language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, behavior specialists,

audiologists, and interpreters to provide more in-depth screening and intervention services.

3. **Formative Assessment:** Supporting the use of formative assessment tools to monitor children's progress and guide instructional planning *across* early learning settings (ABC prekindergarten programs, Head Start, programs that receive voucher subsidies, and programs participating in AR–BB TQRIS). Training, technical assistance, and mentoring will be provided in order to support high-quality implementation.
4. **Process Quality Monitoring:** Strengthening training on the *Environment Rating Scales* and requiring use of the *CLASS* assessment tool as a criterion for achieving the higher levels of AR–BB TQRIS. The implementation of these process quality measures will be accompanied by training, technical assistance, and mentoring to support early childhood educators develop optimal skills and support programs in appropriate use of the results.
5. **Coordinated Data Systems:** Creating a comprehensive data system that will allow for the tracking of data at the child- and teacher-levels across time and provide a robust dataset of classroom quality and child outcomes across programs that will be used for programmatic decision making and improvement efforts.

The following narrative describes each of these pillars in detail and highlights Arkansas' existing supports and ways in which the state intends to expand and build upon these foundations to create a state-of-the-art Comprehensive Assessment System.

Developmental Screenings. Given the critical importance of early identification as the pathway to early intervention and improved outcomes for children with developmental delays and other disabilities, it is imperative that all children have access to high-quality screening and referral services.⁶¹ As noted previously, Arkansas is already investing in providing these services to many children. All children in the ABC prekindergarten program and the state's

⁶¹ See, for example, Guralnick, M. J. (1997). *The effectiveness of early intervention*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing; Hebbeler, K., Spiker, D., Bailey, D., Scarborough, A., Mallik, S., Simeonsson, R., & Singer, M. (2007). *Early intervention for infants & toddlers with disabilities and their families: participants, services, and outcomes*. Final report of the National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study (NEILS). Retrieved from: http://www.sri.com/neils/pdfs/NEILS_Report_02_07_Final2.pdf; and, Bailey, D.B., Hebbeler, K., Spiker, D., Scarborough, A., Mallik, S., Nelson, L. (2005). Thirty-six-month outcomes for families of children who have disabilities and participated in early intervention. *Pediatrics*, 116(6): 1346-52.

Head Start and Early Head Start programs receive a vision, hearing, and developmental screening. In the pre-K program, local programs choose among seven designated screening tools approved by the state for their ease of use and psychometric properties. Head Start programs follow Head Start performance standards related to screening. Furthermore, the Arkansas Department of Human Services has implemented the Project for Adolescent and Child Evaluation (PACE) as a collaborative effort between DHS/Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS). All children entering the foster care system receive a PACE evaluation. The project seeks to remedy barriers to the provision of health care services for children in foster care, particularly the receipt of multidisciplinary, comprehensive health evaluations. A full-team evaluation includes a vision screening, hearing screening, cognitive assessment, academic assessment, behavioral/emotional assessment, medical/developmental evaluation, speech/language assessment, and feeding assessment when appropriate. The PACE team travels the state to ensure that all children in the foster care system in Arkansas are seen. Finally, The Arkansas HIPPO programs are piloting the BRIGANCE Screening and Assessment tools with approximately 5,200 children during the 2013–2014 school year. Children in HIPPO will receive a *BRIGANCE* screening within 45 days of enrollment.

Although children participating in the state’s prekindergarten program, Head Start programs, foster care system, and home visiting program are eligible to receive high-quality screening services, a large proportion of children served by child care programs within the state do not have access to these essential services, potentially delaying identification and necessary intervention services for children with high needs. In a unified system of early care and education, whether a child with high needs attends Head Start, the state prekindergarten program, or a child care center should not determine whether he or she receives a screening. Accordingly, Arkansas is working to significantly expand the number of children in the state who have access to high-quality screening services, particularly through an initiative that targets child care programs receiving subsidy vouchers. In 2012, the state conducted a pilot where child care providers at 66 facilities across 22 counties were trained on the *Ages and Stages Questionnaire–3* (*ASQ-3*; J. Squires & Bricker, 2009) and the *Ages & Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional* (*ASQ: SE*; J. Squires, Bricker, Twombly, & Squires, 2005). The pilot demonstrated the feasibility of the widespread implementation of screening in the state’s child care programs

(UAMS College of Medicine Department of Family and Preventive Medicine, 2011). Based on its successful implementation and training on the use of the *ASQ* screening tools, the state is preparing to expand screening to all providers receiving child care vouchers in the state and as a requirement for programs at upper levels of AR–BB TQRIS. In order to facilitate consistency and the use of high-quality, psychometrically sound instruments across programs, the ARCECEAM Task Force is in the process of identifying an approved list of developmental screening instruments by December 2014, which would be used in all programs. In order to successfully expand and implement screenings in these additional programs, it will be necessary to use RTT–ELC funds to: purchase screening tools for programs; develop train-the-trainer modules for each approved screening instrument; provide professional development to train educators and caregivers on how to give screenings, share the results of screenings with families, and engage in appropriate follow-up actions, such as utilizing referral procedures; and offer coaching and mentoring to programs as they learn to appropriately use developmental screenings in their programs.

Telehealth Pilot for Screening. Given Arkansas’ large rural population, even when early care and education programs practice high-quality screening, it is often a challenge for providers to refer children who have received a positive screen to specialists. Therefore, in addition to more traditional developmental screening instruments that may be administered by early childhood educators in their programs, Arkansas will also engage in an innovative pilot project that uses distance technologies to connect children and programs in rural areas with professionals such as speech–language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, behavior specialists, audiologists, and interpreters to provide more in-depth screening and intervention services. Research suggests that telehealth programs, which use high-speed interactive video and remote computing applications to provide services to consumers living in underserved areas, are a viable alternative when in-person services are not feasible.⁶² Indeed, studies have found that telehealth practices within the context of early identification and

⁶² Cason, J., Behl, D., & Righwalt, S. (2012). Overview of States’ Use of Telehealth for the Delivery of Early Intervention (IDEA Part C) Services *International Journal of Telerehabilitation*, 4(2), 39-46.

intervention are associated with cost-savings, high family satisfaction, and positive child outcomes.⁶³

The early care and education community in Arkansas has a unique opportunity to partner with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), who was recently awarded \$102 million by the National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA) within the Department of Commerce to support a statewide \$128-million broadband infrastructure that will provide telehealth services to community institutions across Arkansas. Through this existing infrastructure and a partnership with the UAMS Center for Distance Health, early identification and intervention services could be provided to many children and families who would otherwise lack access to these types of services. For example, in many parts of the state, it is difficult to meet the demand for speech and language pathology testing in early care and education settings. Through the UAMS telehealth pilot, additional assessments could be performed across the state. Using high-definition video conferencing equipment, certified speech and language pathologists could provide assessment services and group therapy sessions comparable to those that would be provided through traditional on-site modalities, but with increased capacity to reach many more children, families, and programs, particularly those in underserved, rural communities.

Formative Assessment. The state also recognizes the need to identify and consistently implement a formative assessment tool(s) statewide to assist early childhood practitioners in individualizing instruction, guiding curriculum and planning, and helping parents to better understand their child’s developmental progress. Similar to the patterns of use across programs seen for the implementation of developmental screening tools, the use of high-quality formative assessment tools is uneven across program type. Currently, ABC programs serving infants and toddlers use the *Ounce Scale* (Meisels, et.al, 2003) and ABC programs serving 3- to 5-year-old children utilize The *Work Sampling System* (WSS; Meisels, et.al, 2013). Some federally funded programs such as Head Start, Parts B and C require a formative assessment and are allowed to choose a formative assessment tool. In addition, parallel to their pilot of screening procedures, the HIPPPY home visiting programs are currently piloting the *BRIGANCE* formative assessment

⁶³Baharav, E. &Reiser, C. (2010). Using telepractice in parent training in early autism. *Telemedicine and e-Health*, 16, 727-731. Behl, D., Houston, K. T, Guthrie, W. S., & Guthrie, N. (2010). Tele-intervention: The wave of the future fits families’ lives today. *Exceptional Parent*, 40, 23-28. Cason, J. (2009). A pilot telerehabilitation program: Delivering early intervention services to rural families. *International Journal of Telerehabilitation*, 1, 29-37.

tool at 10, 20, and 30 weeks of enrollment in order to inform and individualize services for children and work collaboratively with families to address children's unique developmental strengths and weaknesses.

Currently, neither the state's minimum licensing standards nor AR–BB standards require a formative assessment. New AR–BB program standards will require early childhood practitioners to use either an identified statewide formative assessment instrument or select an instrument from a designated menu of options identified by the ARCECEAM Task Force. Programs that receive child care subsidies and vouchers will also be targeted for expanded use of formative assessment instruments and training. With the addition of these requirements and supports for subsidy/voucher programs and programs participating in AR–BB to the existing set of programs using formative assessments provided in ABC and Head Start programs, most children in the state would be able to receive the benefits of the formative assessment process. In order to support expanded access to formative assessment systems and high-quality implementation, RTT–ELC funds would be used to provide formative assessment tools and training to programs, free of charge; develop train-the-trainer modules for each approved formative assessment instrument, offer professional development to support teachers' understanding of the purposes and use of formative assessment and how to share the results of assessments with parents and use assessment information to guide their work with children; and provide mentoring and coaching to programs as they learn to appropriately implement formative assessments in their programs.

Process Quality Monitoring. In addition to fostering children's learning and development through careful monitoring of their current levels of functioning and progress, Arkansas plans to use assessment in a similar manner to cultivate the professional knowledge, skills, and capacity of its early care and education workforce. Given that children's learning and development is a product of proximal-level interactions and transactions among teachers, children, and materials, it is crucial to examine current levels of quality in learning environments and teacher–child interactions and plan professional development experiences based on teachers'

patterns of strengths and weaknesses in order to maximally support teacher development and, in turn, child development and learning.⁶⁴

In order to assess the quality of early care and education learning environments, the AR–BB quality evaluation and monitoring system currently utilizes the *Environment Rating Scales* (ERS) collection of instruments for programs serving infants and toddlers (*ITERS–R*), preschoolers (*ECERS–R*), school-agers (*SACERS*), family child care settings (*FCCERS*). However, AR–BB does not specifically require high-quality scores on this aspect of *ERS* with the levels currently used in the system. The AR–BB planning committee has proposed additional TQRIS levels with more stringent requirements for *ERS* scores.

The State understands that teacher–child relationships are an essential mechanism for improving child outcomes, and although some aspects of teacher–child interactions are measured within the *ERS*, we recognize that this is not a main focus of these instruments and that there are elements of instructional interactions that are not assessed well within the *ERS* framework. Therefore, the AR–BB planning committee has agreed to add the requirement of a more comprehensive assessment of teacher – child interactions at upper levels of the AR–BB TQRIS. The state will identify and adopt a research-based tool such as the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (CLASS; Pianta et al., 2008) for preschool and infant/toddler programs to provide in-depth analysis of teacher–child interactions. The *CLASS* has strong psychometric properties and has been shown to predict children’s academic and social gains even after controlling for factors such as pretest scores, child and family characteristics, and state (Howes et al., 2008; Mashburn et al., 2008). The *CLASS* is currently used in Head Start programs as part of the federal monitoring process, which will assist Arkansas with alignment.

Just as formative assessment for children should be tied to the curriculum and used to design future learning experiences based on current developmental levels, the *CLASS* will be used to gauge teachers’ current levels of practices and provide information about teachers’ strengths and weaknesses that may be used to tailor professional development opportunities. For example, if a teacher exhibits high scores on the dimension of Emotional Support on the *CLASS*, but lower scores on the Instructional Support scale, a program director might provide guidance,

⁶⁴Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2006). The bioecological model of human development. In W. Damon, & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Theoretical models of human development. volume 1 of handbook of child psychology* (6th ed.,). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

resources, and coaching specifically around planning high-quality learning experiences and activities in the classroom. This is consistent with recommendations from the developers of the *CLASS*, who specify that the instrument can be used to provide teachers with direct feedback about their classroom practices; as a training tool for teachers by providing them with a framework for understanding the components of their teaching that are important for children's learning and development; and as the basis for new models of in-service training that provides teachers with ongoing, flexible, individualize, and collaborative support to improve the overall quality of teacher–child interactions.

The trainings associated with *CLASS* implementation will be multi-faceted and ***. At the staff level, the *CLASS* will be used as a framework to help teachers understand how important their everyday interactions are with young children and which areas have been identified as key to fostering children's learning and development. At the director level, trainings and technical assistance strategies will be developed to help administrators understand how to use the results of the *CLASS* to enhance program quality. RTT–ELC funding will be used to purchase *CLASS* assessment instruments; develop trainings for teachers and administrators; create train-the-trainer modules; provide professional development on the *CLASS* assessment for child care providers and state prekindergarten teachers and administrators; and add ongoing mentoring and coaching supports for *CLASS* implementation as it will be used to support the requirements at the higher levels of the AR–BB TQRIS.

Coordinated Data Systems. Common assessment tools will allow us to develop a data system with common elements that programs use to report screening results that can be linked to the longitudinal data system used in the K–12 system (See A1, E1). An upgrade to the existing DCCECE data system to allow child assessment results at the program level integrated into the system that programs are currently using to register voucher use will increase the accessibility of information. The computer system will be improved for tracking individual children and sharing information across programs. This will reduce the re-screening of children changing programs. The data system currently used by programs that receive state-funding allows for tracking of individual children. If a child should move from one state-funded program to another, his/her data is transferred to the new provider. However, this exchange of information does not currently happen, for example, if a child should move from a state-funded program to a federally-funded program like Head Start.

Linking the *CLASS* results to the TAPP professional development system (see Section (D)(2) for revised system) will increase the ability to track teacher classroom quality and the impact of professional development initiatives. Furthermore, this system allows teachers to receive ongoing, objective data about their strengths, weaknesses, and professional growth trajectory, which may inform changes in their behavior and, with appropriate supports and resources, their self-efficacy as teachers. Further, a data system where teachers' scores are tracked would allow the state to minimize the re-assessment of teachers when changes in employment occur.

Working with ARC (see A1 longitudinal data), these systems will be integrated into the current longitudinal system (i.e., linking teacher quality to child outcomes and early childhood assessment data to K–12 data). We plan to facilitate coordination with ARC to link to other related data systems including early health assessments (e.g., the state's immunization registry). Creating a comprehensive data system, such as the one articulated in this proposal, will allow for the tracking of data at the child- and teacher-levels across time and provide a robust dataset of classroom quality and child outcomes across programs that can be used for programmatic decision making and improvement efforts.

High-Quality Plan

(C)(2)

The Project 4 (C)(2) Table gives a detailed account of the state's high-quality plan for creating and implementing a comprehensive assessment system. The following is a brief summary of the information presented in the table.

Goals

- C.2.1: Streamline number of approved screening tools and expand use of tools
- C.2.2: Develop training modules and provide ongoing professional development and coaching to child care providers
- C.2.3: Create a telehealth pilot for screening referrals
- C.2.4: Strengthen training on use of assessment of environmental quality and quality of teacher–child interactions
- C.2.5: Unify data systems via creation of portal

Activities

- Activities C2.1a to C.2.5d (located in the second column) apply to this goal.

Responsible Agencies

- The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, and the Arkansas Research Center will collaborate on executing these goals.

Timeline

- The list of approved screening and assessment tools will be completed by December 2014; associated trainings will be finalized by August, 2015; the telehealth pilot will begin implementation in January 2015; the data systems portal will be finalized by 2017 (for more details see the fifth column).

Budget

- The budget for creating and implementing a comprehensive assessment system (Project 4) is \$4,655,000. For more specific details, please reference the budget narratives and tables.

Project 4 (C)(2) High-Quality Plan for Expanding Arkansas' Comprehensive Assessment System					
Goal	Activity	Responsible Agency	Agencies Supporting and Advising	Timeline	Measure of Success
C.2.1 Streamline the number of approved screening and assessment tools and expand use of these tools to the child community	C.2.1.a. Create advisory committee on screening and assessment	DCCECE, Division of Development Disabilities Services	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Arkansas Department of Education	Publish list of approved screening and assessment tools by December 2014	<p>On-time and on-budget</p> <p>List contains psychometrically sound screening and assessment tools</p> <p>Strong stakeholder support of final list of approved instruments</p> <p>Process generates energy and excitement for implementation</p>
	C.2.1.b. Issue RFP for contractor to facilitate advisory committee process				
	C.2.1.c. Establish criteria to vet screening and formative assessment instruments				
	C.2.1.d. Host stakeholder meetings to gather feedback on criteria				
	C.1.1.e. Engage in vetting process and publish approved, streamlined list of screening and assessment tools				

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

C.2.2 Develop training modules and provide on-going professional development and coaching to child care providers	C.2.2.a Create training module for each approved screening and assessment instrument	DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education	Training modules by December 2015	On-time and on-budget Modules created for each screening assessment tool
	C.2.2.b Develop modules about discussing screening and assessment results with parents				
	C.2.2.c Develop train-the trainer modules and implement with Arkansas training network				
	C.2.2.d Conduct training sessions with child care providers				
C.2.3 Create telehealth pilot for screening referrals	C.2.3.a Identify pilot sites	DCCECE, Division of Development Disabilities Services	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education	January 2015-December 2015	Well-evaluated, successful pilot that increases number of children receiving early intervention services in the pilot sites
	C.2.3.b Develop pilot concept with UAMS Center for Distance Health				
	C.1.3.c Issue RFP for evaluator and conduct evaluation				
	C.1.3.d Implement Pilot				

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

C.2.4 Strengthen training on using and environmental assessment (ERS) and teacher-child interactions (CLASS)	C.2.4.a Develop “cross training” for ERS and CLASS	DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education	Finalized training by August 2015	On-time and on-budget Broad utilization of training modules
	C.2.4.b Expand the number of trainers				
	C.2.4.c Train assessors on infant and toddler and preschool CLASS to measure teacher child interactions				
	C.2.4.d Train programs on how to use ERS and CLASS results for program improvement				
C.2.5 Unify data systems via creation of portal	C.2.5.a Identify key data from multiple child assessments used across the state	Arkansas Research Center	DCCECE; Head Start Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Developmental Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education	Finalized by December 2017	Document with comprehensive list of assessments and alignment that has been reviewed by the Research Advisory Board and State Longitudinal Data Hub Pilot system that has been tested by three providers
	C.2.5.b Coordinate with State Longitudinal Data System to ensure data compatibility				
	C.2.5.c Solicit input from providers to ensure understanding and ease of use				
	C.2.5.d Develop reports to allow summary information to be communicated to providers				

(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.

Partnerships between early care and education programs and families are a critical ingredient to a high-quality learning experience for young children. Indeed, research indicates that strong family–program connections during the early years are linked to greater academic motivation, grade promotion, and social–emotional skill development for children across diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds (Christenson, 2000; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004). Arkansas has a long history of engaging and supporting families with children with high needs through programs that target the family engagement practices of providers and that also work to directly support families. In 2009, the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission prioritized family engagement as one of their key goals, affirming that the State would work to “increase parental involvement in the child’s education through research-based models and programs to enhance child outcomes and success in school annually.” To this end, Arkansas’ family engagement investments and supports are interwoven through every aspect of the state’s early care and education system, including the state’s TQRIS standards, educational competencies for educators, and state-funded professional development.

Arkansas’ current standards surrounding family engagement are based on the evidence-based *Strengthening Families* initiative, created by the Center for the Study of Social Policy.⁶⁵ The *Strengthening Families* approach includes foundational Protective Factors that help decrease the likelihood of child abuse and neglect and serve to build family strengths and a family environment that promotes optimal child development and learning. These Protective Factors include: 1) parental resilience, 2) social connections, 3) concrete support in times of need, 4) knowledge of parenting and child development, and 5) social and emotional competence of children.

The state has several initiatives to strengthen the capacity of Arkansas families to support their children (see Table (A)(1)-9). The state’s current TQRIS requires activities related to the Strengthening Families initiative that specifically target family engagement and also assesses family engagement with the *Program and Business Administration Scales (PAS/BAS)*; description in Section (B)(1) and Appendix B-3.1 and B-3.2). Additional initiatives in which the state has focused investment—such as the *TIPS for Great Kids* project and related trainings, the support

⁶⁵<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families/the-basics/protective-factors>

for use of the *Family Map* inventories, and the development of the *Family Connection* materials—all demonstrate key successes and the collaborative environment among stakeholders. Other important aspects of our family engagement include professional standards; home visitation programs; and trainings to enhance cultural competency, support dual language learners, and be inclusive of children with disabilities.

Despite these many substantial supports to promote family engagement, the state lacks a coordinated framework to unify these initiatives and ensure that all family engagement efforts are directed toward a common set of goals. In order to create and sustain strategic change for the children and families in Arkansas, we must move to a systemic and sustained approach to make family engagement a core component of education approaches and the state's goals. Therefore, the State seeks to develop a number of initiatives at the state and local level which will increase the coherence and continuity of family engagement strategies, streamline the delivery of family engagement supports, and promote a common understanding of family engagement goals among the early care and education community.

In order to work toward this goal of a unified system of family engagement efforts, three major initiatives will be undertaken:

1. Create the Arkansas Family Engagement Coalition at the state-level consisting of parents, practitioners, policymakers, administrators, advocates, and other stakeholders who will have responsibility for creating local Early Childhood Parent Policy Councils aligned with 15 Educations Corporative, modeled on the Head Start policy councils, to provide guidance on the local early childhood policy, ensure access to and identify gaps in comprehensive services.
2. Create an Arkansas Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework, modeled on the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework.
3. Develop a strategy with local institutions including libraries and museums to hold educational opportunities parents and their children from birth to 5 aligned with the early learning standards.

These three statewide initiatives are described below, followed by a discussion of how Arkansas will use these three entities to guide the integration of family engagement efforts across components of the early care and education system.

1. **Arkansas Family Engagement Coalition.** One of the first steps toward building a cohesive, integrated system of family engagement supports is to establish a committee at the state-level with representatives from multiple stakeholder perspectives, including parents, practitioners, policymakers, and administrators. The DCCECE and the Head Start State Collaboration Office would implement a statewide recruitment process and appoint the members of the coalition. The coalition will be a diverse group representing all stakeholders and all perspectives including dual language learners, children with high needs, child welfare, government agencies, libraries, rural parents, and others. In addition to the AFEC mentioned above, the coalition will provide an infrastructure through the 15 Educational Cooperatives for local engagement and support local institutions to implementing, and evaluation of early care and education programs in their communities and ensure families have access to comprehensive services as well as identify gaps in their communities. The SELPCC will be modeled on the Head Start parent policy councils and parents will be recruited to join, drawing from local and state programs agencies such as Strengthening Families, Arkansas Parenting Education Network, Autism Speaks, and the State School PTA. Local Council members will be trained on topics such as Arkansas revised Early Learning and Development Standards (see Section (C)(1)), statewide family engagement activities and process, governance procedures, management procedures, and the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework.
2. The SELPCC will engage in local and statewide activities such as conducting Community Cafés in locations across the state; conducting a statewide needs assessment to identify state and local needs; working with local programs in setting up local parent governance and management programs; creating a training plan and calendar to be integrated in the TAPP (state professional development) Registry; and creating and managing an Early Learning Parent Resource Center. The local Council will also be tasked with supporting developing and training local family engagement from modeling activities which promote families engagement in learning to families involvement early learning and engagement opportunities as well as the development of policy councils in the state's ABC prekindergarten programs and childcare

programs receiving subsidy vouchers. A State Parent Coordinator will be hired to manage day-to-day operations. The SELPCC will help to create a strong system of coordination across family engagement programs and initiatives with parents at the center of the coordination, planning, and advocacy around these engagement approaches.

3. **Arkansas Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework.** The Arkansas Family Engagement Coalition (AFEC), in collaboration with the Head Start State Collaboration Office, will be tasked with developing a comprehensive framework to support intentional thinking and action regarding the implementation of family engagement policies and practices across the early care and education system and within individual early care and education providers. The Framework will define the State's goals for family engagement, offer family engagement strategies for early care and education providers, and identify resources that support the implementation of those strategies. The framework will also be used as a self-assessment to determine family engagement needs and as a lens through which early childhood programs and policies are evaluated. This framework will be modeled on the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework and will be informed by the Head Start family engagement outcomes as well as the principles of effective family engagement articulated by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.
4. In order to develop this comprehensive Framework, an RFP will be issued for external support to assist the Family Engagement Coalition in development of the Framework. After a draft of the Framework has been drafted, review sessions will be hosted with stakeholders. Based on stakeholder input, the Framework will be revised and submitted for expert review. Final stakeholder review sessions will be held and the document will be finalized. To meet the needs of Arkansas' changing population (see Section (A)(1)), the Framework will be reviewed for cultural and linguistic appropriateness as well as translated/trans-created in Spanish. The final documents will be made available to providers and families throughout the State.
5. **Arkansas' Vision for a Comprehensive Family Engagement System**

6. Arkansas wants and supports family engagement approaches that are grounded in data, adequately funded, and embedded into the educational structures and processes, linked to the early learning and development standards that are designed to support the long-term success of young children and their families. The following sections articulate how Arkansas will achieve this integrated system of family engagement supports by using the three statewide initiatives outlined above to guide the incorporation of family engagement more thoroughly into state licensing and TQRIS standards; ensure that early childhood practitioners understand and have the resources to implement high-quality family engagement strategies; and build upon existing family engagement initiatives.

(C)(4)(a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of it Program Standards

Arkansas does have a set of principles and program standards regarding Family Engagement. Although lacking the depth, reach, and comprehensiveness and intentional alignment regarding the cultural and linguistic needs of families the Arkansas Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework outlined above will address these deficits and be guided by the principals of the National Association for the Education of Young Children's position paper on family engagement.

Within Arkansas' licensing requirements for child care and AR–Better Beginnings TQRIS are the foundational standards that guide programs toward promoting the Protective Factors outlined in the Strengthening Families Framework and engaging in culturally and linguistically sensitive approaches to family engagement. Built into licensing requirements and TQRIS standards are: 1) specific practices and strategies programs can implement to foster family engagement; 2) professional development and program improvement supports to help programs understand the importance of family engagement and develop meaningful plans for action; and 3) evaluative components that address the degree to which programs are successful in their family engagement efforts. These components of the standards will be described briefly followed by a discussion of proposed changes to strengthen the presence of family engagement as an indicator of program quality.

The foundation of the progression of standards for family engagement is found in Arkansas' new minimum licensing requirements for childcare. These requirements (see Appendix A-1.1) mandate that each center provide at least four of a number of accepted parent involvement activities. These activities range from providing parent conferences at least once per year to discuss development and learning; to hosting family activity nights; to establishing regular parent communication techniques (texts, emails, newsletters, etc.); to ensuring parental participation in program and policy development. Furthermore, the TQRIS standards outline a continuum of information-sharing practices programs can engage in with families regarding children's health and development. These practices range from distributing information about ARKids (Arkansas' child health insurance program) with families at Level 1 to sharing specific information about nutrition and physical health with families at Level 3.

In addition to explicitly identifying specific family engagement strategies in the licensing requirements and TQRIS standards, Arkansas also embeds utilization of specific family engagement related training opportunities and program improvement supports into its progression of the AR–BB TQRIS standards. For example, at Level 2 of AR–BB, a program administrator is required to complete a Strengthening Families webinar (described in more detail in Section C(4)(b)) and at Level 3, the administrator is required to complete a Strengthening Families online self-assessment for three or more family engagement strategies as well as develop as Strengthening Families action plan and implement at least one action step.

Finally, to complement these supports for programs, AR–BB also contains elements of program evaluation around family engagement across the TQRIS levels. For example, AR–BB uses the *Program Administration Scale (PAS)* (Talan and Bloom 2004) to assess the quality of administrative and business practices, which contains multiple items related to two family partnership areas: 1) *communication with families* (e.g., the extent to which screening results are communicated to parents; a family's perspective about child rearing and cultural practices are solicited during meetings and conferences), and, 2) *family support and involvement* (e.g., the program offers one or more supports to families such as referral to social services or ESL classes; special events and classroom activities are offered to parents). See Appendix C.4.1 for the family engagement items of this scale. The use of and performance on the *PAS* is woven throughout the levels of AR–BB. At Level 1, an administrator must attend a *PAS* Basic Training session, such that they develop the knowledge and skills necessary to use this tool for accurate

evaluation and constructive program improvement. At Level 2, the program must be reviewed by a certified *PAS* assessor, and to obtain the highest rating on the state's TQRIS (Level 3), a program must receive an average score of 4 out of 7 on the *PAS* instrument. A similar progression of training requirements and minimum score requirements is seen for the use of the *Environment Rating Scales*, which also contain items relevant to family engagement (Provisions for Parents).

With RTT–ELC funds, Arkansas intends to improve on the state's current progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement by building upon the existing strengths articulated above. The following is a description of specific ways in which the measurement of family engagement within the AR–BB TQRIS will be strengthened.

Enhance Presence of Family Engagement Component of AR–BB. Although, as illustrated above, family engagement components are woven through the AR–BB TQRIS levels, they are currently embedded within other categories of program quality. As found in the 2010, TQRIS evaluation family engagement requirements are found in multiple standards and tools in the existing TQRIS. For example, many of the references to family engagement are included in the “Administration” component of AR–BB. During the process of revising the AR–BB, we propose to make the family engagement elements streamlined, visible and explicit, to highlight the importance of these practices. The state will explore creating a separate Family Engagement component within the AR–BB system that will address the full continuum of strategies, professional development and program improvement supports, and performance indicators of family engagement that may be present within a program. As discussed below, this continuum will incorporate the principles of effective family engagement set forth by the proposed Arkansas Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework, and will be informed by Head Start family engagement outcomes and principles of effective family engagement practice outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Aligning AR–BB Family Engagement with the Arkansas Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework. Although the overarching framework of Arkansas' family engagement efforts is built around cultivating the Protective Factors of the Strengthening Families Approach, these Protective Factors are the end-goals of family engagement efforts. For programs, it is also important to articulate process goals, which articulate what programs should be doing to achieve these outcomes. These process goals outlining strategies for family

engagement will be articulated in the proposed Arkansas Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework. These goals will be informed by the principles of effective family engagement practices put forth by the NAEYC and the family engagement goals stated in the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework. For example, one of the NAEYC principles for effective practice is that programs provide learning activities for the home and community.” Similarly, Head Start advocates that programs support families during the transitions of early childhood such as when a child moves from an early care and education program to elementary school.

Many of Arkansas’ current family engagement efforts already reflect these recommendations. For example, home–school communication (Principle 2) is addressed by the licensing regulations (Parents are informed of the center’s programs and activities through a parents’ bulletin board, regular newsletter, email, or web page); AR–BB (program shares information with families about health and development); and items on the *PAS* (center communicates with families in their home language; center communicates using multiple modes of communication). However, we believe that this alignment could be strengthened and additional process goals could be incorporated into AR–BB in order to further delineate variations in the quality of family engagement practices seen at the different levels of the TQRIS.

For example, both NAEYC and Head Start recommendations include program efforts to help develop parents as strong advocate’s for their children’s education and to include parents in program-level decision making and wider advocacy efforts. The establishment of a local program policy council, consistent with part of the mission of the state-level SELPPC, may be included at the upper levels of the AR–BB TQRIS. Ultimately, the family engagement component of the TQRIS will be driven by the proposed Arkansas Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework that reflects the unique family engagement priorities of Arkansas’ early care and education community.

Refine professional development opportunities. Given the importance of not only setting forth the expectations for high-quality family engagement practices, but also supporting programs in the implementation of these efforts, the State will also work to further refine and develop the trainings and professional development opportunities related to family engagement. These supports are described in detail below in Section (C)(4)(b).

(C)(4)(b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an ongoing basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards;

Arkansas currently funds a range of professional development opportunities in the areas of family engagement and outreach to families. This professional development is free, provides credit in the Travel Arkansas' Professional Pathways (TAPP) professional development registry (discussed in Section D), and is available in all regions of the state and online. Professional development opportunities are provided in a variety of modalities, including web-based opportunities, traditional workshop formats, and relationship-based models of professional development such as consultation. Furthermore, professional development opportunities are tailored for multiple members of the early care and education system workforce, including program staff, teachers, directors, and technical assistance specialists, such that family engagement principles are a common thread interwoven throughout early care and education settings.

Much of Arkansas' professional development around family engagement is centered around the research-based *Strengthening Families* initiative. For example, teachers and administrators are trained on use of the *Family Map Inventory*, a research-based tool that supports programs in the identification of protective factors such as social connections, concrete support in times of need, and knowledge of parenting and child development. The research-based tool documents family needs and resources and has been shown to increase teacher–parent communication.⁶⁶ In the first year of funding by the state, 140 agency administrators and 212 educators were trained to implement the *Family Map Inventory* in their early care and education setting. We estimate that as a result, 345 families of infants/toddlers and 1,553 families of preschool children will be impacted by higher quality family engagement. The high-quality plan expands this training opportunity with specific, targeted outreach for children with high needs as well as infants and toddlers.

In addition, to support programs in achieving the highest tier of the state's TQRIS, additional training is offered to program directors on the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework. It is a six-hour, online workshop offered in computer labs, and directors are

⁶⁶<http://www.thefamilymap.org/>

encouraged to bring a parent from their program. After completing the training, directors complete an online assessment of their practices and create an action plan for one family engagement strategy identified during the training. Last year, 63 directors participated, resulting in 48 programs being in compliance with Level 3 standards for AR–Better Beginnings. The high-quality plan below significantly expands this training opportunity.

Technical assistance (TA) specialists are also exposed to the Strengthening Families Initiative, such that they may offer high-quality TA around family engagement strategies. The State supported and collaborated with the National Alliance of Children’s Trust Funds (NACTF) to develop a two-day training, *Bringing the Protective Framework to Life in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems: A Resource for Action*. The Strengthening Families Leadership Team recommended providing this training to all DCCECE professional development contract trainers to enable them to embed *Strengthening Families* into their professional development projects. The high-quality plan below also significantly expands this training opportunity.

The Strengthening Families Framework includes children’s social and emotional competence as a key protective factor for healthy family functioning. Arkansas supports teachers and families prevent, identify, treat, and reduce the impact of mental health problems among children birth to age six through Project PLAY (Positive Learning for Arkansas’ Youngest), which connects child care programs with Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) services. *Relationship-based professional development* (RBPD) models, such as ECMCH, aim to foster change and cultivate teacher and parent knowledge and skills within the context of a relationship with a highly skilled professional (National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center, 2009). Recent reviews of the research indicate that there is growing evidence to suggest that ECMHC models yield positive outcomes including building behavior and classroom management skills, use of developmentally appropriate practices and expectations, overall improvements in classroom climates, and reductions in the levels of problematic behavior in young children and rates of preschool expulsion (Hepburn, Kaufman, Perry, Allen, Brennan, & Green, 2007). ECMCH models also offer families support in the form of psychoeducation and consultation to help families cope with problem behaviors in ways that promote healthy development, promote positive child–caregiver relationships, and foster positive relationships between families and program staff with the goal of improving communication about children’s strengths and needs. This innovative model is offered free of

charge to child care programs throughout Arkansas. During 2012–2013, Project PLAY partnered with a total of 31 child care centers and 145 teachers. ECMHC program consultants made 679 site visits to provide consultation services, and conducted 90 trainings for continuing education credits.

A second program that facilitates children’s social and emotional competence through providing teachers with information and strategies to share with families is REACH (Reaching Educators and Children). REACH is designed to help teachers understand and manage children’s challenging behaviors and promote healthy development. REACH prioritizes facilities that serve vulnerable families (e.g. low income, foster families) across the state. REACH also serves centers that primarily serve children with disabilities (DDTCS, CHMS). The training is aimed at providers; however, each session includes information to be shared with parents. REACH was launched in 2012 and to date has served more than 140 teachers, including teachers in centers serving children with disabilities, centers serving foster children, and centers serving low-income children.

Teaching Important Parenting Skills (TIPS) for Great Kids focuses on facilitating families’ knowledge of parenting and child development, another Protective Factor as articulated in the Strengthening Families Framework. This evidence-based program has two components: 1) professional development for early educators in child care settings and 2) parenting education and support. *TIPS* is based on the notion that the parent–teacher relationship is the mechanism for linking the home and school systems to shape children’s development. Child care providers are trained to engage parents, build positive relationships, respond to parents’ immediate parenting interests and concerns, and provide anticipatory guidance. Research has shown that the use of *TIPS* is linked to improved parenting skills, knowledge of child development, and child outcomes.⁶⁷ UAMS conducted 22 *TIPS* Basic Training sessions for 344 center-based providers and 20 family child care home providers in FY 2012; in FY 2013, UAMS conducted 27 trainings with 607 providers.

Statewide training and technical assistance conducted by the Welcome the Children program helps educators be more intentional in their practices with diverse families, addressing the changing demographics of Arkansas’ population as discussed in Section (A)(1). This

⁶⁷<http://www.tipsforgreatkids.com/>

program helps providers address the TQRIS standards related to cultural and linguistic competency by assisting early childhood professionals to better understand diversity, appreciate cultural differences and similarities, learn strategies to support dual language learners, and promote inclusion. These trainings are highly relevant to educators' family engagement practices and include topics such as: how to approach cross-cultural communication with Latin American children and their families; how to foster the emergent literacy skills of dual language learners by working with families to support the home language; working with and effectively dialoguing with bilingual interpreters to build communication between preschool educators and parents who speak a different language; and building skill sets of bilingual personnel to capitalize on their role in relationship-building with families.

These professional development initiatives are a strong foundation on which to build future efforts to train and support early childhood educators in their use and understanding of family engagement strategies. However, these trainings are currently not well-coordinated as a cohesive system of professional development and do not take into account practitioners' existing competencies or previous training experiences. Furthermore, the most recent data on program's *PAS* scores in the areas of Communication with Families and Family Support and Involvement were relatively low ($M = 3.12$ and $M = 4.55$, respectively on a 7-point scale), with large standard deviations ($SD = 2.11$ and $SD = 1.81$), indicating wide variability in the quality of implementation of family engagement strategies. This suggests that there are areas of training and professional development on which the State can substantially improve. Therefore, the state will use the proposed Framework and the input of the Arkansas Family Engagement Coalition and State Early Learning Parent Policy Council to streamline and coordinate state-funded training for family engagement to create a scaffolded set of family engagement trainings that are linked to the AR–BB TQRIS levels and Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

(C)(4)(c) Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources

Similar to the abundance of professional development strategies surrounding family engagement, Arkansas also has a wealth of existing supports, programs, and initiatives that address family engagement. However, the State believes that under the unifying proposed Framework and with the guidance of the Arkansas Family Engagement Coalition and the State Early Learning Parent Policy Council, this myriad of resources could be streamlined into a state-

of-the-art, integrated system of family engagement supports. Existing family engagement initiatives, which form the foundation for future development and reform, are described below.

Home Visiting Programs. As noted in Section (A)(1), Arkansas is a rural state where many families have to travel significant distances to access services using a weak public transportation infrastructure. Such barriers to service delivery significantly limit access to health, parenting, and other services. As such, the state finds that providing services to children with high needs in the home through one of a number of evidence-based home visiting models is a particularly effective service delivery options. Home visiting programs in Arkansas offer a particular strength in serving infants and toddlers. Multiple funding sources sustain the state's robust home visiting services such as Arkansas Medicaid; the Arkansas Children's Trust Fund; and Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) formula and competitive expansion grant funds. Through these programs, Arkansas engages in many evidence-based home visiting services for families with children ranging from pre-birth through age three such as the Nurse–Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, Health Families America, and Following Baby Back Home, which is a home visiting service for medically vulnerable low birth weight infants and their families after discharge from neonatal intensive care units around the state.

Home visiting services are also provided for families with children three- to five-years-old. It is no coincidence that that Home Instruction Program for Parents of Pre-School Youngsters (HIPPY) National Headquarters is located in Little Rock—Arkansas has the largest HIPPY program in the country. Using funds from the Arkansas Better Chance prekindergarten program, the state currently provides home visiting services through HIPPY and Parents as Teachers for over 5,300 children with high needs and their families in the state. MIECHV funds are also being used to expand the Home Instruction Program for Parents of Pre-School Youngsters (HIPPY). It is expected that a minimum of 2,500 families in at risk communities will receive the in-home support they need as a result of MIECHV funding.

Each of the models being implemented with current state funding are established as evidence-based practices by the US Department of Health and Human Services and have a long history of established peer-reviewed research demonstrating impacts in the areas of child development and school readiness, child health, family economic self-sufficiency, positive parenting practices, and reductions in child maltreatment. Program materials for many of the

models are provided in both English and Spanish and cultural competence is an element of model trainings.

In addition, to this funding, Arkansas has additional resources that will be used to promote and develop a high-quality system. These include the Arkansas Home Visiting Network (AHVN)⁶⁸ and MIECHV, the Center for Effective Parenting (CEP)⁶⁹, the Center for Youth and Families⁷⁰, Autism Speaks⁷¹ (a parent established science and advocacy organization), the Dyslexia Project⁷² (a grassroots family organization), Epilepsy Support groups (e.g., PEACE⁷³), the AR Foster Care Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) support system⁷⁴, community educational and parent organizations (e.g., BEE Coalition⁷⁵), Head Start Association⁷⁶, Head Start Parent groups, and State-level PTA.⁷⁷

Community Cafés. As part of family engagement efforts, Arkansas has piloted the concept of Community Cafés. The National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds developed the Community Cafés Program to “change the lives of children through conversations that matter.” The program involves the Strengthening Families Framework, parent leadership, and parent partnership with early care and education programs. Community Café’s facilitate parent voices to impact policy, communities, and programs to promote protective factors for children and families. Limited infrastructure (e.g., trained teams) has been developed, but the pilot project was supported by the communities. Community Café programs will be established in at least five locations throughout the state by the State Early Learning Parent Policy Council.

Parent Resources. Many resources are currently available to parents to assist them in developing the skills and resources they need in order to support their children’s learning and well-being. For example, the Department of Child Care and Early Childhood Education

⁶⁸<http://www.arhomevisiting.org/>

⁶⁹<http://parenting-ed.org/>

⁷⁰<http://centersforyouthandfamilies.org/>

⁷¹http://communities.autismspeaks.org/site/c.ihLPK1PDLoF/b.7501055/k.6BE9/Autism_Speaks_in_Arkansas.htm

⁷²<http://www.thedyslexiaproject.com/#!arkansas-act-1294-outlined/c17ou>

⁷³<http://www.fctd.info/organizations/11686>

⁷⁴<http://www.fosterarkansas.org/ffresource.htm>

⁷⁵<http://www.beecoalition.com/>

⁷⁶<http://www.arheadstart.org/>

⁷⁷<https://arkansaspta.org/>

developed a collection of materials entitled *Family Connection*, to connect families with their early care and education programs and to encourage linkages with community supports. *Family Connection* shows programs how to provide parents with activities they can do with children at home linked to early learning activities done during the day. These tools are available at no-cost to providers online, but they are currently underutilized. The State plans to develop a training to encourage their use. Additionally, the AR–BB website houses many parent resources, such as information about how to use the TQRIS rating system information; an online wizard to help families easily determine eligibility for services such as ABC, KidCare, and special nutrition; and a parent communication group presented and approved by the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission. Eventually, existing resources such as these would be organized and disseminated through the Early Learning Parent Resource Center maintained by the State Early Learning Parent Policy Council.

The High-Quality Plan

Arkansas will build on the resources and commitment described above to create a high-quality, coordinated family engagement system. The state will create stronger culturally and linguistically appropriate family engagement standards that are also more inclusive for children with disabilities through the TQRIS reforms outlined in Section (B). Arkansas has already included these family engagement elements in the 2009 revision of the Arkansas Key Content and Competencies for Early Childhood Providers discussed in Section (D), and will dedicate significant professional development resources to training on culturally and linguistically appropriate, inclusive family engagement strategies.

As such, the plan offered here is to create a strong state infrastructure for these family engagement reforms connected to local community hubs to inform the work that will be a part of Sections (B) and (D), to more overtly and systematically engaging parents and families as key stakeholders in systems planning and decision-making, and to create a network of trained parent advocates across the state. The state will:

1. Create the Arkansas Family Engagement Coalition at the state-level consisting of parents, practitioners, policymakers, administrators, advocates, and other stakeholders, which will be responsible for developing local Early Learning Parent Policy Council developed through 15 existing Educational Cooperatives. Modeled on Head Start parent policy

councils, the local-level Council will consist of parents from across the community and will provide guidance on the local and state’s early childhood policy. This Council will be tasked with ensuring family engagement in local child care and Arkansas Better Chance prekindergarten programs, and will be the primary vehicle for disseminating information about family engagement trainings and efforts across the state

2. Create an Arkansas Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework, modeled on the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework. The Framework will define the state’s goals for family engagement and be used both as a self-assessment to determine family engagement needs and also as a lens through which early childhood programs and policies are evaluated.
3. Develop a strategy with local institutions including libraries and museums to hold educational opportunities parents and their children from birth to 5 aligned with the early learning standards.
4. Expand and align successful parent engagement models based on the Arkansas Family and Community engagement framework including Project PLAY, home visiting models, and Community Cafés. Use the Framework and the input of the Family Engagement Coalition to streamline and coordinate state-funded training for family engagement (e.g., *Strengthening Families*, *Welcome the Children*, *TIPS for Great Kids*) to create a scaffolded set of family engagement trainings that are linked to the AR–Better Beginnings TQRIS levels and educator competencies.

High-Quality Plan

The Project 5 (C)(4) Table gives a detailed account of the state’s high-quality plan for strengthening family engagement initiatives. The following is a brief summary of the information presented in the table.

Goals

- C.4.1: Create Arkansas Family Engagement Coalition
- C.4.2: Create Arkansas Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework
- C.4.3: Partner with museums and libraries to increase family engagement among families
- C.4.4: Revise family engagement components of AR–BB TQRIS
- C.4.5: Expand family engagement innovations and trainings

Activities

- Activities C4.1a to C.4.5.g (located in the second column) apply to this goal.

Responsible Agencies

- The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, the Head Start State Collaboration Office, and the proposed Family Engagement Coalition will collaborate on executing these goals.

Timeline

- The Family Engagement Coalition will be established by March 2014 and the Framework will be finalized by 2015 as these foundational components will guide the rest of the work in this area. Partner agreements and implementation of library and museum strategies will be in place by April 2015. The AR–BB revision will be completed by summer 2015 and the expansion and training support for existing innovations will be an ongoing process throughout the grant period (for more details see the fifth column).

Budget

- The budget for strengthening family engagement initiatives (Project 5) is \$3,356,000. For more specific details, please reference the budget narratives and tables.

Project 5 (C)(4) High-Quality Plan for Strengthening Family Engagement Initiatives Statewide					
Goal	Activity	Responsible Agency	Agencies Supporting and Advising	Timeline	Measure of Success
C.4.1 Create Arkansas Family Engagement Coalition	C.4.1.a Implement statewide recruitment process for Coalition members	DCCECE/ Head Start State Collaboration Office	Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education; Arkansas Home Visiting Network; Rural; Arkansas Library Association	March 2014	On-time and on-budget Diverse group representing all stakeholders and all perspectives, including DLL, children with Disabilities, Child Welfare, government agencies, libraries. Rural parents and others
	C.4.1.b Provide orientation and outline Coalition mandate				
	C.4.3.b Create local early learning Parent Policy Councils Developed through the existing educational cooperatives				
	C.4.3.b Conduct training of policy councils				

(D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

(D)(1) Developing Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--

1. Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children’s learning and development and improve child outcomes;
2. Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and
3. Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State’s Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Current Status

As the field of early childhood education develops an increasingly rich understanding of children’s development and learning, it is crucial to explore how best to support teachers in developing the necessary competencies to implement research-based practices in early care and education settings. Arkansas recognizes that a well-educated and qualified workforce is critical to nurturing the learning and development of young children, particularly those with high needs. Beginning in 1999, Arkansas began the development and implementation of a comprehensive professional development system to increase the professional capacity of its early childhood workforce through a coordinated system of education, training, and related activities. RTT–ELC funds will be used to improve the existing system by enhancing policies and procedures, and building a more cohesive, comprehensive infrastructure of training and post-secondary education supports that will improve the knowledge and skills of the state’s early childhood workforce.

The Arkansas early childhood professional development system is called the Traveling Arkansas Professional Pathways (TAPP). The TAPP System includes three main components that jointly work to ensure the delivery of high-quality professional development opportunities through career pathways that meet the diverse needs of early childhood professionals. The first component of the TAPP System is Arkansas Key Content Areas and Core Competencies—a workforce knowledge and competency framework—which describes professional standards across a continuum of what early care and education professionals should know and understand in order to provide high-quality experiences for children. Second, the TAPP Map serves as a “roadmap” that provides the progression of equivalent

training hours, degrees, and competency levels (See appendix D-1.1). Finally, the TAPP Registry serves to ensure quality, continuity, and accessibility of training opportunities. The Registry has three components:

- The Practitioner Registry maintains a record of individual early childhood practitioners' professional development. This record assists Registry members in planning a career path and continued development.
- The Trainer Registry verifies trainer education, specialized training, and experience in training adults. Through the Registry website, verified trainers may access summaries of their training evaluations and view preliminary rosters for registered training.
- The Training Registry lists professional development opportunities as submitted by registered trainers. The Registry website includes schedules of upcoming training and offers online registration for many workshops.

Collectively, the workforce knowledge and competency framework, the TAPP Map, and the TAPP Registry form a comprehensive, integrated system of professional development for all early care and education professionals working with and on behalf of Arkansas' young children. Arkansas believes strongly in the power of the TAPP System to effect meaningful change, and as a part of program quality improvement efforts, membership in the TAPP Registry will be required for staff in all licensed facilities by July 1, 2014.

In order to ensure that Arkansas' professional development system is consistent with current research and best practices, the state will reference NAEYC's "Workforce Designs: A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems" throughout its proposed reform agenda. The NAEYC Blueprint articulates six essential policy areas that make it possible to build and support a comprehensive, integrated professional development system. These principles—which guide Arkansas' high-quality plan for a professional development system—include:

- *advisory structure* (see (D)(1)),
- *professional standards* (see (D)(1)(a)),
- *career pathways* (see (D)(1)(b)),
- *articulation* (see (D)(1)(c)),
- *financing* (see (D)(2)(b), and
- *data* (see (D)(2)(c).

Within each of these policy areas, NAEYC also defines four principles for policymaking to guide decisions and actions: integration; quality assurance; diversity, inclusion, and access; and compensation parity. The following sections present evidence that Arkansas has a high-quality plan for each essential policy area that has taken these key principles into consideration.

Advisory Structure

Coordinating a comprehensive, effective system of preparation and ongoing development and support for all early care and education professionals requires a targeted effort by a specific group of people to focus on this work. As such, the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission (AECC; see appendix A-3.1 for information about the AECC) will reconvene the TAPP Advisory Committee (TAC). Although currently inactive, this group has historically been responsible for implementing the AECC's goal of creating an integrated, coordinated system of professional development and has previously overseen modifications and reforms to Arkansas' TAPP System. The TAC will examine needs, develop key documents, and provide policy recommendations to the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE), who will fund and execute initiatives within the professional development system. Consistent with the NAEYC principle of integration, the TAC will include representation from all early care and education stakeholders—including the Arkansas Department of Education, the ABC prekindergarten program, Head Start, Home Visiting, IDEA Part B and Part C, AR–BB TQRIS, Arkansas' institutions of higher education, CCDF programs, child care licensing, and DCCECE. This comprehensive membership will ensure that the group's work will be recognized and valued across sectors and provide for cross-sector, integrated recommendations. Furthermore, the TAC shall solicit input from organizations and agencies that represent a diverse spectrum of expertise, knowledge and understanding of broader workforce development issues and of professional development needs of the early childhood and care workforce.

The main goals of the TAC as outlined in this proposal will be to:

1. Modify the Arkansas Key Content Areas and Competencies for Early Care and Education Providers to ensure alignment with current research and recommendations, revise advanced level competencies, and develop competencies for trainers.
2. Develop a career lattice—aligned to the Core Competencies—that will provide pathways for reaching higher professional levels through training and college coursework.
3. Develop a sustainable process for continuously reviewing all trainings, college coursework, and licensure to ensure alignment with the Arkansas Key Content Areas and Core

Competencies; ensure that new trainings developed on early learning standards, formative assessment, and family engagement are aligned to the Core Competencies.

4. Evaluate and expand current relationship-based professional development approaches (e.g., coaching, mentoring, consultation) and support implementation by developing a coaching guide for program administrators.
5. Increase access to trainings for early care and education providers and practitioners in rural communities through a variety of evidence-based and promising approaches to improving teacher capacity including distance learning, media resources, and video-based coaching.
6. Monitor the use of professional development bonus award/professional development grants and policies around the development of Individual Professional Growth Plans to encourage the use of funds towards college coursework. Arkansas will increase the availability of scholarships for practitioners who want to pursue college credit towards obtaining degrees and credentials.
7. Conduct a workforce study in order to better understand the current status of the state's early childhood workforce.
8. Enhance and increase the capacity of the TAPP registry to collect data on the early childhood workforce so that information can be aggregated and communicated to key stakeholders, policymakers and the general public on the status of the state's early childhood workforce.

(D)(1)(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes

Professional Standards

In addition to striving to foster children's learning and development, Arkansas' early care and education system also endeavors to facilitate the professional growth of its staff through high-quality professional development opportunities and the development of career pathways to meet the diverse needs of its workforce. Arkansas acknowledges that early childhood providers—like the children they serve—are at different stages in their development and learning as professionals and have varying levels of experience, knowledge, and understanding. In order to guide professional development efforts that scaffold different levels of knowledge and experience, Arkansas has developed a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework that delineates a continuum of early childhood educator competencies. The leveled competencies defined within the framework serve to: assist individuals to identify strengths

and areas for potential growth; help programs hire, evaluate, and plan meaningful growth opportunities for their staff; allow state-level administrators to identify areas of need and evaluate the effectiveness of professional development initiatives; and provide consumer information for families choosing among early care and education options.

Consistent with Arkansas' history as a pioneer in the field of early care and education, the idea of creating a set of leveled competencies to demonstrate professional growth trajectories was explored as early as 1999 when a Core Competency Workgroup was first formed as a sub-group of the original TAC. Through the course of their work, the workgroup established ten competency areas based on CDA, NAEYC, and state Pre-K–4 licensure standards. The policy document outlining these competencies was approved and disseminated in 2004.

Consistent with NAEYC's recommendation that standards be reviewed and updated on a regular basis (the principle of quality assurance), the workgroup reconvened in 2007 to examine the use of the framework document and make revisions based on stakeholder input and the most current research and recommendations for best practice. As a part of this process, Arkansas partnered with Keystone, Inc.—an independent evaluator—to conduct an evaluation of the use of Arkansas' early childhood professional development system, including the framework (see Appendix D-1.2). Results of this evaluation, as well as a review of the professional literature and the work of other states that had developed leveled competencies, indicated that the competencies were not well understood. Therefore, the workgroup recommended simplifying and clarifying the competencies. The revised document—the “Arkansas Key Content Areas and Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals” (see Appendix D-1.3)—contained eight (rather than 10) Key Content Areas with three levels of competencies. This framework was adopted in 2009 and is currently in use as an integral part of the TAPP System.

The eight Key Content Areas in the current document include: 1) child growth and development; 2) learning environment and curriculum; 3) positive interactions and guidance; 4) family and community; 5) child observation and assessment; 6) health, safety and nutrition; 7) professional development and leadership; and 8) program planning and management. Within each key content area is presented a continuum of what early care and education professionals should know and understand in order to provide high-quality experiences for children. The framework includes three levels of professional competency: *foundation*, *intermediate*, and *advanced*. The framework provides specific indicators across 38 sub-domains within the ten Key Content Areas. For example, within the math sub-

area of learning environment and curriculum, a professional at the *foundation level* would be able to “Use mathematical language with children in daily experiences (e.g., *bigger than, more than, as many as*, etc.).” A professional at the *intermediate level* would “Plan and provide opportunities appropriate to the children’s developmental levels that promote exploration of shapes, sizes, space, measurement, and time.” Finally, a professional at the *advanced level* would be able to “Articulate, analyze, evaluate, and apply current theory and research on promoting mathematical thinking.” Competencies at higher levels subsume competencies at lower levels.

Although not prescriptive, the framework specifies targeted staff roles, levels of education, and degrees of professional development that would be expected at each competency level. It should be noted that the degrees listed are not meant to place individuals on a career lattice (however, the proposed creation of a career lattice aligned to the framework is discussed in Section (D)(1)(b)). The competency levels and expected commensurate levels of education, professional development, and corresponding staff roles are as follows:

- *Foundation Competencies*: assistant teachers with a high school diploma, GED, or degree unrelated to child development and limited experience with professional development. These individuals have limited responsibility for planning children’s learning experiences
- *Intermediate Competencies*: lead teachers, assistant directors, and team members with a CDA credential, one-year technical certificate in early childhood education or related area, or an associate’s degree in early childhood education or related field. These individuals are expected to have work experience or professional preparation (preferably with extended field experience) sufficient to plan and implement curriculum and learning environments and support assistant teachers within the classroom.
- *Advanced Competencies*: lead teachers, educational coordinators, curriculum supervisors, site directors, owners, agency/central office staff, and early childhood who hold a bachelor’s degree or higher in a field appropriate to job responsibilities and ages of children served. These individuals are expected to have work experience or professional preparation (preferably with extended field experience) sufficient to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate policies and procedures based on current research and best practices/evidence-based practice; and for providing modeling and supervision for other staff).

Although the current document represents the foundation of a high-quality workforce knowledge and competencies framework, Arkansas is committed to continuous improvement efforts. Furthermore, with

the new requirement that all staff in licensed facilities become members of the TAPP Registry by July 1, 2014, clearly defined workforce knowledge and competencies will be critical. Therefore, the state is prepared to revisit the framework and engage in a revision process, which will not only ensure that the framework reflects the most current research and recommendations for best practice, but also incorporates and aligns with systemic changes made as a result of other RTT–ELC projects—such as Arkansas’ revised Early Learning and Development Standards (see Section (C)(1)), enhanced Comprehensive Assessment System (see Section (C)(2)), and expanded Family Engagement strategies (see Section (C)(4)). Specific goals of this revision process will include: 1) simplifying wording, removing redundancies, and ensuring competencies most related to positive child outcomes are included; 2) streamlining and formatting the competencies so that practitioners and trainers have a clear outline for the progression of knowledge and skills; 3) conducting a thorough review of criteria for advanced level competencies; and 4) developing workforce knowledge and competency progressions for trainers.

As outlined in the High-Quality Plan for Project 5—Building a High-Quality Professional Development System—the AECC will reconvene the TAC, who will be charged with reviewing and modifying the “Arkansas Key Content Areas and Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners” The TAC will conduct a thorough review of the professional literature, work of other states in this area, NAEYC recommendations, and state licensure standards (foundational work has already been conducted in identifying core knowledge and competencies for teachers who obtain Arkansas’ new birth to kindergarten teacher licensure described in Section (D)(1)(b)). The initial revised draft of the workforce knowledge and competencies framework will be submitted for review by national experts and organizations (selected through an RFP process) who will ensure the competencies reflect current research and best practices and support the maintenance of a culturally and linguistically diverse workforce. Based on expert recommendations, stakeholder input and recommendations will be solicited via public forums. The input from these forums will be used in the final revisions of the workforce knowledge and competencies framework document. Arkansas will contract with a publisher to finalize the presentation of the document in a way that guides professionals in their use and understanding of the framework. The final revised version of the “Arkansas Key Content Areas and Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals”—which will be completed by December 2014—will be disseminated through professional development advisors, university advisors, workshops, conferences, online training sessions, YouTube videos, and e-newsletters. The TAC will establish

policies and procedures for aligning all trainings and university-level coursework to the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Framework.

(D)(1)(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework

Career Pathways

As noted in the NAEYC Policy Blueprint, professional standards—such as those described in Arkansas’ Key Content Areas and Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals—should align and create coherent career pathways for early care and education professionals. These career pathways are essential for early childhood professionals to be able to plan and sequence the attainment of increased qualifications, understand the professional possibilities of achieving increased qualifications, and be appropriately compensated for making continuous progress. Consistent with these goals, Arkansas has developed the TAPP Map, which helps early childhood professionals navigate the progression of credentials and degrees that are aligned to the state’s workforce knowledge and competency framework. The TAPP Map describes eight levels of professional development based on training and education and is organized according to the three competency levels of the framework:

- Foundation Competency Level
 - Foundation 1: Registered 15 clock hours including orientation
 - Foundation 2: Registered 30 clock hours
 - Foundation 3: Registered 45 clock hours or 3 semester hours
- Intermediate Competency Level
 - Intermediate 1: CDA or 135 clock hours or 9 semester hours in early childhood education/child development
 - Intermediate 2: Accredited higher education 18 semester hours in early childhood education/child development
 - Intermediate 3: Associate degree or 25 semester hours in early childhood education/child development
- Advanced Competency Level
 - Advanced 1: Bachelor’s degree in early childhood education/child development or 30 semester hours in early childhood education/child development
 - Advanced 2: Master’s or doctorate degree in early childhood education/child development or 30 semester hours in early childhood education/child development

Consistent with NAEYC recommendations, the TAPP Map is not intended to be a stand-alone document, but rather is integrated into other components of Arkansas' early care and education system. Indeed, the TAPP Map plays a key role in quality improvement efforts as it is embedded within AR–BB—Arkansas' TQRIS—which recognizes the various roles and levels in the career pathways of the TAPP Map. Participation of administrators and staff in the TAPP Registry (or ADE Registry) is mandatory to participate in AR–BB and achievement on the TAPP Map is embedded in AR–BB ratings as follows:

- Level 1 of AR–BB TQRIS:
 - Administrator must meet requirements for TAPP Foundation 3 or higher, including 21 clock hours of training in program planning/management and/or leadership.
 - All staff must meet requirements for TAPP Foundation 1 within the first year of employment.
- Level 2 of AR–BB TQRIS:
 - Administrator meets requirements for TAPP Intermediate 1 or higher, including 30 clock hours of training in program planning/management and/or leadership.
 - All staff meet requirements for TAPP Foundation 1 or higher and at least 50% of teaching staff meet requirements for TAPP Foundation 2 or higher.
- Level 3 of AR–BB TQRIS:
 - Administrator meets requirements for TAPP Intermediate 1 or higher, including 45 clock hours of training in program planning/management and/or leadership.
 - All staff meet requirements for TAPP Foundation 1 or higher and at least 50% of teaching staff meet requirements for TAPP Foundation 3 or higher.

Through this integration with the TQRIS, increased educational attainment and competency demonstration is encouraged at the program level. With the proposed revisions of the AR–BB TQRIS outlined in Section (B), the role of staff qualifications and TAPP Map achievement will be re-examined, particularly given the proposed expansion of the TQRIS to include different levels at higher levels of quality.

Although the TAPP Map is a strong foundation on which to build established career pathways within Arkansas' early care and education workforce development system, some changes are proposed in order to strengthen the use of this tool. First, the 2007 Keystone, Inc. evaluation referenced earlier indicated that the professional pathways articulated in the TAPP Map could be clarified with additional

information for providers and programs. The TAC will work toward developing supplemental materials that further clarify this document and provide definitions, FAQs, etc. Second, in order to assist early childhood professionals in planning and traversing their personal career pathway, the TAPP System will incorporate the additional requirement that all providers complete an Individual Professional Growth Plan (IPGP) that outlines achievable goals, timelines, and targeted supports that will help them achieve their goals. Each provider should participate in the planning of his or her professional development and work with a supervisor to develop an IPGP. To assist practitioners and programs develop IPGPs, the TAC will also develop and design a clearly articulated, detailed career lattice that is based on the revised Key Content Areas and Core Competencies, the TAPP Map, and revised AR–BB TQRIS levels.

In addition, the TAPP Registry has recently hired the first Professional Development Advisor, with the goal of having one Professional Development Advisor in each of the eight technical assistance regions in the state. The primary activities of the Professional Development Advisor(s) will be:

1. to provide training, coaching, and/or technical assistance for individual practitioners on creating their own (IPGP), using the Arkansas Key Content Areas and Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals; a template for an IPGP and a user's guide for developing a plan are being finalized;
2. to offer guidance to directors and supervisors who are implementing an individualized model of staff development in their programs, assisting them in supporting staff in creating and implementing IPGPs;
3. to help practitioners connect to resources and training opportunities that support their planned professional growth, including in-service training and college coursework and degree programs.

(D)(1)(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Alignment and Articulation

Similar to the importance of aligning early learning standards, curricula, and formative assessment measures in an early care and education classroom to effectively support young children's learning, it is equally critical to align the professional standards to the professional development content for early childhood professionals. Given the significant role of multiple institutions and organizations in providing professional development to Arkansas' early care and education practitioners, it is important

to ensure that the content of all professional development opportunities is aligned with the Arkansas Key Content Areas and Core Competencies. Furthermore, the NAEYC Blueprint also specifies that it is critical to develop and enforce policies around articulation—the transfer of credentials, courses, credits, degrees, etc. from one program to another without loss of credits—in order to fully establish career pathways and build capacity to meet required professional standards. The sections below discuss efforts in Arkansas to 1) align all training opportunities with the Core Competencies framework, 2) align content provided in postsecondary institutions and licensure tracks to the Core Competencies framework, and 3) establish articulation across career pathways.

Alignment of Training Opportunities to Core Competencies

The DCCECE contracts with trainers to provide a broad menu of in-service training for all licensed and registered early care and education settings, including ABC programs and child care programs that accept subsidy vouchers—at no-cost to the participants or programs. DCCECE requires all training agencies and trainers to identify the Key Content Areas and Core Competencies addressed in each of the trainings provided, ensuring alignment with the Core Competency Framework (see (D)(2)(a) for more information). The TAC will ensure that available training opportunities are inventoried and aligned with the revised Core Competencies and will use RTT–ELC funds to build a sustainable process for ensuring that all future trainings continue to be linked with the Core Competencies. For instance, TAPP Registry procedures will require that all trainers, instructors, and training institutions/organizations review and realign trainings and coursework to the newly revised Core Competencies as needed. Maintaining training alignment to the Core Competencies will be particularly important for practitioners such as family child care providers in rural communities who may not have access to or the option of pursuing higher education.

Furthermore, the state will evaluate and revise the policies and procedures for verifying (approving) trainers and for registering training. These procedures will ensure that trainers, training content, and training strategies are of high-quality, align with adult learning theory, and with the Core Competencies that are known to support positive learning outcomes for children. Proposed reforms to the TAPP Registry would involve validating trainer competency and training outcomes rather than trainer credentials only. TAPP quality standards will require key documentation to confirm the quality of the training.

Alignment of Postsecondary Institution Course Content and Licensure to Core Competencies

The Arkansas Department of Education is in the process of adopting a revised licensure system. The current Pre K–4 license will be replaced by a Birth to Kindergarten Integrated Special Education (B–K) license (See Appendix D-1.3) in the fall 2014. The competencies outlined for the proposed B–K license were aligned with the PRAXIS-II Assessment and NAEYC and CEC standards. Higher education programs that offer a Pre-K–4 Credential worked recently as a cohort to create a series of courses that would transfer among the institutions and were aligned with the workforce knowledge and competencies in creating their program. Institutions of higher education that have an existing Pre-K Licensure program did not reference the existing Core Competencies, but cross-walked with the NAEYC standards, which were used to create the advanced level within the competencies. Thus all early childhood programs in postsecondary institutions have programs aligned with the current workforce knowledge and competencies or national standards that meet the state’s competencies.

Table (D)(1)-1 presents early childhood degrees in the state that include the current Pre-K–4 or the proposed B–K licensure. Once the workforce knowledge and competencies have been modified the TAC will determine if there is a need for a re-review of degree and licensure requirements to ensure they are aligned with the state’s workforce knowledge and competencies. This will be completed in the second year of the grant. In addition, Arkansas will initiate a statewide coalition of four-year teacher training programs leading to the Birth through Kindergarten teaching license.

Table D(1)-1. Early childhood degrees in Arkansas that include current Pre-K–4 licensure or proposed B–K licensure.

CDA	Associate’s	Bachelor’s	Master’s
Child Development Associate Credential	Child Care	Childhood Education Bachelor of Science in Education (Pre-K– 4 license)	Early Childhood Services, Master of Science
	Childhood Education, Associate in Science	Early Childhood Development, Bachelor of Science	Early Childhood Education, Master of Science in Education
	Early Childhood Development, Associate of Applied Science	Elementary Education, Bachelor of Science in Education (Pre-K– 4 license)	Early Childhood Education, Master of Arts in Teaching (ending with Pre-K–4 licensure)
	Early Childhood Paraprofessional Technology	Family and Consumer Sciences, Bachelor of Science	Early Childhood Special Education, Master of Science in Education
	Preschool Professionals (Birth–Pre K Credential),	Human Development and Family Sciences, Bachelor of Science in Human	Early Childhood Education, Master of Education

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

	Associate of Applied Science	Environmental Sciences	
		Human Sciences (Human Development and Family Studies), Bachelor of Science	Human Environmental Sciences, Master of Science
		Pre-K–4 Licensure, Bachelor of Science in Education	GC Instructional Specialist, Early Childhood Special Education Pre-K–4
		Professional Studies BPS	GC STEM Education for Early Childhood K–4

Certificate of Proficiency or diploma (less than one year): An award for completion of a program designed for less than one year (15 semester credit hours or less). It is awarded to students demonstrating mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in a specific area or discipline and not normally part of other programs leading to a technical certificate or associate degree include: Child Development, Child Development Associate, Early Childhood Development, Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Paraprofessional Technology, Family Development,

Technical certificate or diploma (at least one, but less than two, years): an award for completion of a program designed for at least one, but less than two, full academic years. It recognizes completion of competency in an occupational field and may be part of an A.A.S. curriculum or a stand-alone program and include: Early Childhood Development, Early Childhood Education,

This list does NOT include: Associate of Arts in teaching (AAT) that may be offered for Early Childhood, but is merely a “passport” to the ECE licensure and has limited (at most 6) hours of specifically early childhood education content; most universities do not designate to the Arkansas Department of Higher Education if they offer the AAT for early childhood education.

Articulation Across Career Pathways

Consistent with NAEYC Blueprint recommendations, Arkansas has instituted policies and made available programs that support the advancement of early childhood practitioners along an articulated career pathway. In 2005, the state passed Act 6720 authorizing the Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS). The transfer system streamlines the process for early childhood practitioners to move along the career ladder to higher credentials by increasing their ability to transfer credit from one postsecondary institution to another. The Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS) is a postsecondary education resource service that provides comparable course information to facilitate student transfer within Arkansas public colleges and universities. The ACTS database contains faculty-generated comparable course information for a number of courses offered at public institutions in Arkansas. Comparable courses within ACTS are guaranteed to transfer for full credit to any Arkansas public institution. ACTS is beneficial for students, parents, and academic advisors because it provides accurate, up-to-date comparable course information for educational planning and informed decision-making.

Another program in the state that supports early childhood professional development is the Credit When Its Due (CWID) program. The CWID program is a partnership between the Arkansas Association of Two Year Colleges (AATYC), Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) and

the Arkansas Research Center (ARC). The CWID program retroactively awards an associate’s degree to students who began at a two-year college and transferred to a four-year college, but did not receive a bachelor’s degree (but have enough credits for an associate’s degree). The state found that in the first year of the program, 1,057 students (over 48% of the transfer cohort) had 60 credit hours that could be eligible for reverse transfer. The state will ensure that early childhood practitioners are made aware of this program—through regional professional development advisors and university advisors—as they continue along their path of professional development.

High-Quality Plan

The Project 6 (D)(1) Table gives a detailed account of the state’s high-quality plan for developing a professional development system. The following is a brief summary of the information presented in the table.

Goals

- D.1.1: Revise the Arkansas Key Content Areas and Core Competencies

Activities

- Activities D.1.1 to D.1.11 (located in the second column) apply to this goal.

Responsible Agencies

- The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education and the TAPP Advisory Committee will collaborate on executing this goal.

Timeline

- The final revised document will be completed by December of 2014. Reviewing alignment with trainings and university coursework will occur during January through April of 2015 (for more details see the fifth column).

Budget

- The budget for revising the Key Content Areas and Core Competencies is included in the entire Project 6 (Developing a Professional Development System) budget of \$6,400,364. For more specific details, please reference the budget narratives and tables.

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

Project 6 (D)(1) High Quality Plan to develop a Professional Development System					
Goal	Activity	Responsible Agency	Agencies Supporting and Advising	Timeline	Measure of Success
D.1. Developing Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	D.1.1 Convene the TAPP Advisory Committee D.1.2. Review and modify the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies D.1.3. Develop workforce knowledge and competencies for trainers D.1.4. Draft proposed competencies for review by national experts and organizations D.1.5. RFP/Contract with national experts D.1.6 Conduct public forums for input and recommendations D.1.7 Finalize revisions and modifications D.1.8. Through RFP process hire publisher for layout, design and printing D.1.9. Disseminate WKC professional development advisors, university advisors, workshops and conferences and other media, You tube and newsletters D.1.10 Establish policies and procedures for aligning all trainings to the WKC D.1.11. Review all university level coursework to ensure alignment with the WKC	DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Developmental Disabilities	January 2014 – December 2017	On-time and on-budget TAPP Committee established A competent, knowledgeable workforce with a progression of credentials to promote upward mobility in teacher skills

(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

(D)(2)(a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that-

1. Are aligned with the State’s Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;
2. Tightly link training with professional development approaches, such as coaching and mentoring; and
3. Are supported by strong evidence (e.g. available evaluations, developmental theory, or data or information) as to why these policies and incentives will be effective in improving outcomes for Children with High Needs;

Alignment of Training to Core Competency Framework

In order to accommodate the needs of Arkansas’ diverse early care and education workforce, the state currently offers a wide range of professional development opportunities. As discussed previously, the TAPP Training Registry includes all approved training opportunities throughout the state. The scope of these trainings is significant and includes trainings offered by multiple institutions and providers including postsecondary institutions, non-profit organizations, medical centers, public libraries, and certified individual trainers. Furthermore, Arkansas recognizes that learning experiences include a variety of methodologies and offers a wide range of types of training opportunities including university/college courses, workshops, conferences, technical assistance, mentoring and coaching supports, and online models of professional development. Through these diverse training modalities, Arkansas seeks to address the different learning styles and needs of its early care and education workforce as well as reach as many providers as possible, particularly those in rural communities.

As mentioned in Section (D)(1)(c), DCCECE requires all training agencies to identify the Key Content Areas and Core Competencies addressed in each of the trainings provided, ensuring alignment with the Core Competencies. Providers and trainers are able to search the TAPP Registry by Key Content Area or by intended Core Competency Level. Tables D(2)-1 and D(2)-2 present the number of trainings within the TAPP Registry that are aligned with the Key Content Areas and intended Competency Levels, respectively (many of the trainings are offered at multiple times and locations, but only unique trainings were counted; some trainings overlap across multiple Key Content Areas and Competency Levels).

Table D(2)-1. Number of trainings in the TAPP Registry that address each of the Key Content Areas.

Key Content Area	Number of Trainings in TAPP Registry	Number (%) of Trainings Offered Online
Child Growth and Development	196	82 (41.8%)
Learning Environment and Curriculum	147	55 (37.4%)
Positive Interactions and Guidance	94	13 (13.8%)
Family and Community	123	71 (57.7%)
Child Observation and Assessment	42	7 (16.7%)
Health, Safety, and Nutrition	94	36 (38.3%)
Professional Development and Leadership	70	14 (20.0%)
Program Planning and Management	93	29 (31.2%)

Table D(2)-1. Number of trainings in the TAPP Registry that address each of the Competency Levels.

Intended Competency Level	Number of Trainings in TAPP Registry	Number (%) of Trainings Offered Online
Foundation Level	299	164 (54.8%)
Intermediate Level	135	16 (11.9%)
Advanced Level	22	1 (4.5%)

As is evidenced by the tables, there is wide coverage of each Key Content Area and most Competency Levels, providing early care and education professionals a variety of opportunities to cultivate their knowledge and skills. However, it should be noted that as the Advanced Level competencies are reviewed as part of the revision of Arkansas' Key Content Areas and Core Competencies (as outlined in Section (D)(1)(a)), it is anticipated that more trainings will be aligned or developed as needed, as there are currently relatively few trainings available that address the Advanced Competency Level.

Furthermore, in an effort to maximize the reach of professional development opportunities, particularly for providers in rural areas, there are a substantial number of opportunities to participate in online professional development. Exceptions to this trend include opportunities in the Key Content

Areas of Positive Interactions and Guidance as well as Child Observation and Assessment, areas in which more interactive experience, modeling, and feedback for participants may be especially important. In addition, although many of the trainings intended for professionals at the Foundation Level are offered online, the proportion of online trainings decrease across the Intermediate and Advanced levels. Although much of the basic knowledge needed at the Foundation Level (e.g., health and safety procedures) can be conveyed through online modules, as the knowledge and skills expected from professionals increases in complexity across competency levels, more in-depth experiences are needed with greater opportunities for interaction and feedback. The following sections discuss Arkansas' commitment to providing relationship-based models of professional development--other innovative uses of technology (e.g., web-based coaching) in order to continue outreach efforts to providers in rural areas but still maintain the interactive components of face-to-face trainings.

Relationship-Based Professional Development Initiatives

Parallel to the understanding that children's learning occurs primarily within the context of relationships, there is growing recognition that teacher knowledge and development also are constructed through relationship-based learning approaches. Indeed, experts in the field of teacher professional development have called for a movement toward relationship-based professional development (RBPd) models,^{78,79} which aim to foster change and cultivate teacher knowledge and skills within the context of a relationship with a highly skilled professional.⁸⁰ There is a growing research base documenting the effectiveness of RBPd approaches such as mentoring, coaching, consultation, and technical assistance in increasing teacher knowledge and use of effective classroom practices^{81,82,83}

⁷⁸ Bowman, B., Donovan, M. S. & Burns, S. (Eds). (2000). *Eager to learn: Educating our preschoolers*. Washington, D.C.: National Research Council.

⁷⁹ Fukkink, R. G., & Lont, A. (2007). Does training matter? A meta-analysis and review of caregiver training studies. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 22, 294–311. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.04.005

⁸⁰ National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center. (2009). *Relationship-based professional development: Models, qualifications, training, and supports*.

⁸¹ Hepburn, K., Kaufmann, R., Perry, D., Allen, M. D., Brennan, E., & Green, B. (2007). *Early childhood mental health consultation: An evaluation tool kit*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center for Child & Human Development.

⁸² Isner, T., Tout, K., Zaslow, M., Soli, M., Quinn, K., Rothenberg, L., & Burkhauser, M. (2011). *Coaching in early care and education programs and quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS): Identifying promising features*. Washington, D.C.: Child Trends.

Currently in the Arkansas professional development system approaches such as mentoring, coaching, and consultation are embedded in various training projects, and the state has been building and promoting a culture of RBPDP for more than ten years. These supports are meant to help early care and education professionals cultivate their skills across a range of competencies through individualized, ongoing feedback and reflective practice with another professional. Coaching and mentoring is paired with both face-to-face and online professional development for administrators and teachers serving infants/toddlers and preschoolers. These supports are embedded in a range of trainings that focus on teacher–child interactions such as Making Every Day Count, Hand-On Routine Care, Intentional Teaching, and Conscious Discipline. Coaching supports are also available as parts of trainings that focus on the curriculum and learning environment (Curriculum Institute) as well as child observation and assessment practices (*Work Sampling System* New Teacher Training). Within these training opportunities, teachers build their knowledge and learn specific strategies during a workshop, conference, or online session. As part of ongoing follow-up efforts, coaches or mentors visit their classrooms and observe, model, and reflect with teachers about the application of these practices.

Another strong example of RBPDP in Arkansas is the Project PLAY program (described in Section (C)(4)) that provides teachers (and families) with early childhood mental health consultation (ECMHC) services regarding children’s challenging behavior and mental health. Similar ECMHC models have been linked positive outcomes including building behavior and classroom management skills, use of developmentally appropriate practices and expectations, overall improvements in classroom climates, and reductions in the levels of problematic behavior in young children and rates of preschool expulsion (Hepburn, Kaufman, Perry, Allen, Brennan, & Green, 2007). This innovative model is offered free of charge to child care programs throughout Arkansas. During 2012–2013, Project PLAY partnered with a total of 31 child care centers and 145 teachers. ECMHC program consultants made 679 site visits to provide consultation services, and conducted 90 trainings for continuing education credits.

In order to build the capacity of a well-trained, skilled cadre of mentors, coaches, consultants, and other RBPDP providers, Arkansas offers a menu of professional development opportunities for mentors, coaches, and technical assistance providers, as well as program administrators and supervisors

⁸³Neuman, S. B., & Cunningham, L. (2009). The impact of professional development and coaching on early language and literacy instructional practices. *American Educational Research Journal*, 46(2), 532–566.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0002831208328088>

who want to use RBPB approaches to support professional development efforts within their program. For example, the national *Strengths-Based Coaching* (SBC) curriculum is offered by Arkansas trainers who are certified SBC trainers. This course helps administrators, supervisors, and coaches become more effective as they support the professional growth of staff in their interactions with families and children in their care. Similarly, in 2012 Arkansas began offering training in Powerful Interactions Coaching (PIC), in which coaches model for teachers the types of interactions that have been shown to be linked to positive child outcomes. PIC uses a reflective, strengths-based approach that engages teachers in identifying ways in which they are effective and how those behaviors positively affect children's learning. Other professional development for coaches and mentors is available online, and was developed in collaboration with national mentoring and coaching experts Carol Gestwicki, Judy Jablon, and Charlotte Stetson.

Some of the factors influencing the effectiveness of coaching include the coach's depth of knowledge in child development and early education; the coach's level of training on and understanding of the coaching model; a high degree of fidelity to the coaching model; and a framework of supports for coaches (Pianta, Hamre, & Hadden, 2012). A Mentor Endorsement credential was offered by the state from 2002–2011. With the expansion of RBPB strategies, there is a need to evaluate existing professional development for mentors, coaches, and other RBPB providers. Additional training opportunities will be added as needed and a mentoring/coaching certificate will be developed to build capacity to embed mentoring and coaching in additional trainings and expand the use of these RBPB within programs. Furthermore, Arkansas intends to develop a guide for administrators on how to implement in-house mentoring and coaching in order to support their staff. The guide will be developed by a committee that includes coaching instructors, experienced coaches, administrators, and teachers representing a variety of program types such as private child care providers, Pre K, and Head Start. Finally, the state will work licensing specialists, regional trainers, and Professional Development Advisors to identify practitioners and administrators who could benefit from mentoring and coaching based on their individual professional growth plans.

Regional Training Facilities

In addition to the RBPB approaches described above, Arkansas believes that providers can also benefit from powerful peer modeling and learning experiences. Therefore, Arkansas is proposing to establish regional training venues—including infant/toddler, preschool, and programs that serve special populations—that would serve as model programs for all early childhood practitioners. In addition to lab

schools on postsecondary campuses, community-based programs will partner with postsecondary institutions to become regional training venues. The TAC will establish protocols for determining model program status. Furthermore, through a small pilot program, the TAC will seek to explore questions such as:

- What knowledge and skills are needed by model site and postsecondary institution staff to effectively facilitate observations by visiting practitioners?
- What is the optimal structure and timeframe for an observation visit?
- Who is most likely to benefit from participating in an observation visit to a model site?
- What follow-up is needed to optimize the observation visit experience and application of observed practices at the practitioner's work site?

The TAC will appoint a committee to draft standards for the structure and implementation of the regional training venues. Arkansas will evaluate and determine the cost and identify potential funding strategies to a) sustain the training venues at the conclusion of the grant, and b) enable early childhood practitioners to participate in observation visits.

Meeting Training Needs in Rural Communities

As discussed in Section (A), Arkansas is a largely rural state and children, families, and programs located in rural communities face a unique set of challenges. In order to provide high-quality services for this high-needs population, it is vital to ensure that providers within these rural communities receive appropriate levels of training and support. To meet the needs of a largely rural state, Arkansas has steadily increased the availability of online professional development over the past ten years. Furthermore, new TAPP System and licensing requirements stipulate that all providers must complete a Professional Growth Plan and that annual training must be job-specific. These changes are expected to further increase the demand for wider availability and accessibility of a variety of trainings, particularly so that providers in rural communities can meet these new requirements.

With funding provided through this RTT–ELC grant, the state will use the TAPP Map, the career lattice to be developed (see Section (D)(1)(b)), and the data from the workforce survey (see Section (D)(1)(c) to identify additional professional development that should be offered online in order to increase accessibility for early childhood practitioners located in rural communities. The state will provide funding and technical assistance to professional development contractors for online course building. In addition, to ensure the highest quality of online professional development, the state will develop and offer training for those who will serve as online instructors and facilitators.

Video-Based Training/Coaching

Although the regional training sites and RBPD approaches described previously will allow many early childhood professionals to observe and learn from model practices and develop their skills through interactions with a skilled professional, the state acknowledges that not all providers, particularly those in rural communities will be able to access and benefit from these resources. However, innovative solutions are being developed to address issues of access and efficiency. For example, MyTeachingPartner is a cutting-edge program that essentially employs coaching practices through web-mediated remote consultation and video libraries of effective teaching practices. Coaches observe classrooms via video technology then provide feedback and consulting via real-time, online video sessions. The use of technology allows for a broader base of classrooms to be served at a lower cost. A random assignment evaluation of the program demonstrated gains in process quality (i.e., instructional and emotional interactions) for teachers participating in the program over the course of a year.⁸⁴

Arkansas proposes a similar innovating professional development strategy using video and reflective coaching. The state will use RTT–ELC funds to work with 10 early learning and development programs that are of different program types and that are located in different geographical regions. The entire staff of each site will commit to working with a team of coaches over a three-year period to become more intentional teachers and thereby improving learning outcomes for children. The coaching teams will film teachers at the participating sites and then use the video clips to guide teachers in identifying moments of teaching effectiveness, reflecting on the connection to children’s learning, and planning next steps. This unique type of professional development will create lasting change in the practice of the teachers in the project. Video clips from the 10 sites along with on-camera interviews with the teachers and administrators will be edited to produce a series of Arkansas videos demonstrating best practices directly related to the Arkansas Early Learning and Development Standards and to the Arkansas Key Content Areas and Core Competencies. Coaches and trainers will use the resulting videos as professional development tools in their coaching activities, workshops, courses, and online training activities.

Arkansas has had some experience with the impact of the video process on professional growth. In April 2013, a team of coaches worked with national early childhood videography consultants to

⁸⁴Pianta, R. C., Mashburn, A. J., Downer, J. T., Hamre, B. K., & Justice, L. (2008). Effects of web-mediated professional development resources on teacher-child interactions in pre-kindergarten classrooms. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23, 431-451. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2008.02.001

produce a series of five videos showing what a good learning center looks like and showing teacher–child interactions that extend the child's learning. The videos were shown during a general session at an early childhood conference in August 2013. Anecdotally, the professional growth resulting from the video work has been substantial. The teachers who participated in the creation of the videos reported that the video making process was “the best professional development experience they have ever had”. Each of the five teachers not only increased their conscious competence with children to support learning, but also grew in professionalism and self-efficacy. The team of coaches led an audience of about 350 practitioners in viewing and reflecting on each 5-minute video, with many participants commenting that they learned more from the video session than from many other workshops and classes. The video professional development project will impact the teachers participating in the production process and also the many practitioners who will see the work of their colleagues and hear fellow-Arkansians describe their professional journeys and encourage others in refining their instructional practice. If Arkansas determines that this project is successful, the state will explore how this model might be expanded, particularly in conjunction with the telehealth model described in Section (C)(2) as the technology equipment and infrastructure for reaching rural programs for both interventions could be shared, further minimizing costs and providing greater services to programs that serve children with high needs.

(D)(2)(b) Implementing effective policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) to promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that-

1. Are aligned with the State’s Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;
2. Tightly link training with professional development approaches, such as coaching and mentoring; and
3. Are supported by strong evidence (e.g., available evaluations, developmental theory, or data or information) as to why these policies and incentives will be effective in improving outcomes for Children with High Needs;

A further tenet of an effective system of professional development specified by the NAEYC Policy Blueprint is the issue of financing and incentivizing quality improvement via increased education and ongoing development of early care and education professionals. Consistent with NAEYC recommendations, Arkansas provides financial support at the individual and program level. At the individual level, Arkansas provides financial support for early care and education professionals to obtain

education and ongoing development, based on need. Through RTT–ELC funding, Arkansas intends to expand the Arkansas Early Childhood Scholarship Program by offering five million dollars in scholarships. Early care and education professionals seeking to achieve a higher degree of education would be able to use these scholarships at two-year and four-year institutions as well as for CDA assessment. Scholarships may be used to cover tuition fees up to \$2,500 (6 credit hours per year is approximately \$600 at a two-year institution) or may be used for other education-related expenses such as fees and books. Eligibility for scholarships will be based on FAFSA info and priority will be given to professionals who participate in programs that are at Levels 2–5 of the revised AR–BB TQRIS.

In addition to supporting individual professionals in seeking to cultivate their skills and knowledge through higher education, Arkansas also provides financial support for programs that facilitate professional development. As described in Section (B)(2), Arkansas provides incentives and professional development grants participating in the AR–BB TQRIS. The professional development grants were initially used for credit bearing coursework only. However, as a result of evaluations to determine barriers to provider participation in AR–BB, the state modified the requirement in 2011. Grants can now be used to cover the costs of additional professional development and clock hour requirements including—but not limited to—release time and substitute staff, travel costs, and classroom resources (materials and equipment associated with the professional development). As criteria for receiving the grant, programs must specify how these expenditures are related to their program improvement plan.

As part of its continuous improvement process, Arkansas has partnered with UAMS to track and evaluate the utilization of the professional development grants to better understand how to effectively support providers in accessing training and educational opportunities. The information generated through the evaluation being conducted through UAMS will be used throughout the grant period to identify a variety of innovations and approaches for early care and education professionals to obtain higher qualifications.

(D)(2)(c)Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention; and

Consistent with Arkansas’ commitment to data-driven decision making and recommendations put forth by the NAEYC Workforce Policy Blueprint, Arkansas seeks to use workforce and professional development data to inform planning, evaluation, quality assurance, and accountability. Although

Arkansas' TAPP Registry is a strong foundation from which to build a comprehensive workforce data system, Arkansas recognizes that the system—as currently implemented—has several limitations. First, not all providers are members of the TAPP Registry. Second, many providers do not follow through with documentation submission leading to incomplete and inaccurate data. Third, the scope of the data currently collected in the TAPP Registry is insufficient to provide meaningful data on the current status of the workforce. The reforms outlined below illustrate Arkansas' plan to transform the TAPP Registry into a comprehensive workforce data system that will inform professional development policies and practices.

First, reforms will address expanding participation in the TAPP Registry. Currently, TAPP membership is required for programs participating in AR-BB, but as discussed in Section (B), this does not include all programs in the state. Current TAPP Registry data indicates that there are 34,125 early childhood practitioners who have completed TAPP trainings in the past three years. Furthermore, the TAPP Registry relies on members to submit original transcripts and other documents to verify their educational level and credentials and to move to higher levels on the TAPP Map. However, many practitioners do not follow through with the documentation and therefore are placed at a lower level that does not reflect their professional accomplishment or indicate their qualifications at all. For instance, as of June 30, 213, of the 34,125 TAPP participants, only 3,759 (11% of total membership) had verified their educational degrees. Although many early care and education providers may, in fact, have not attained a college degree, it is likely that this low participation significantly biases estimates of workforce qualifications. In order to address these issues, new licensing regulations will require all participants in licensed child care facilities to be members of the TAPP Registry, significantly expanding the scope of providers and their characteristics that are captured within this database. Furthermore, TAPP members will be required to enter and regularly update information related to their education level and employment status.

Second, revisions to the TAPP Registry will be made that provide a broader, more meaningful scope of data indicators. Data collected within the TAPP Registry will be expanded to include information about program characteristics such as primary funding source, organizational status, and participation in various subsidy programs. Program-level data will also be collected regarding the population and ages of children served, including the total number of children served by the program and the numbers of children receiving subsidies, who have special needs, and who are dual language learners. Teacher-level characteristics will include factors such as demographic characteristics;

experience in the field; educational qualifications, credentials, and degrees; tenure, and role (director, teacher, trainer, coach, etc.). Additionally, as discussed in Section (C)(2), classroom process quality information (from an evidence-based tool such as the *CLASS*) would also eventually be incorporated into the system, which would provide a rich set of data with which to link professional development experiences in order to gain a better understanding of the effects of various professional development efforts. The TAC will review and enhance TAPP registry enrollment procedures and data elements as needed and build connections to other state databases including higher education. The state is already beginning conversations and will explore the opportunity to collaborate more closely with the State Longitudinal Data System which operates with dual database architecture.

The information gained through this expansion will provide state leadership and early childhood stakeholders with more complete information on the educational levels of staff working in licensed child care facilities, promote the assignment of unique identifiers for early childhood practitioners, understand the educational qualifications, credentials, and degrees of the of the early childhood workforce, recognize trainer qualifications, as a means for approving training that is aligned to the workforce knowledge and competencies, and increase the state's ability to more accurately identify and target training needs throughout the state. The state will hire one additional RTT–ELC data staff to provide oversight and support for this effort (See proposed budget in Section (A)(1)).

In addition, as quality initiatives have expanded, the state has increased access to training, and the number of online trainings available on the TAPP registry has increased. Since the tiered quality rating and improvement system was introduced in 2010, the number of program directors applying for trainer status has increased significantly. The TAPP Registry reports that as many as 50% of TAPP-registered courses are now initiated by an independent trainer rather than by an institution or training agency; 41% of trainers are not associated with a training organization or with a postsecondary institution. To increase teacher effectiveness in improving outcomes for children, the TAPP processes for registering training and for verifying trainers will be evaluated. Policies and procedures will be put in place to ensure that trainers, training content, and training strategies are of high quality, aligning with adult learning theory and with teaching competencies that are known to support positive learning outcomes for children. In addition, with the increased use of mentor coaches throughout the professional development system, the state is anticipating increased teacher effectiveness.

To examine the causes of staff turnover and explore means for staff retention, Arkansas will begin to use the TAPP registry to track changes in employment. A detailed evaluation of turnover in Year 1 will

also be conducted to examine other effective efforts to reduce turnover. The information gained will assist the state in successful strategies help maintain staffing that is so critical to the continuity of care in early childhood programs.

Currently the Better Beginnings website includes information for families about the professional development and qualifications standards required for each level, but the state does not currently provide aggregated data or information on the status of early childhood practitioners, education or professional development advancements, or the retention rate for providers employed by programs enrolled in Better Beginnings. The state will use RTT–ELC funds to expand and reformat this information on the AR –BB website once baseline data and information is collected from the statewide workforce study.

Workforce Study

The state believes that expansion of the TAPP registry database will provide the data needed to publicly report aggregated data on the status of the early childhood workforce, including education level and retention. However, the state must first conduct a workforce study in order to obtain baseline data. RTT–ELC funds will be used to conduct the study and expand the capacity of the TAPP Registry to collect the needed data and enhance the TAPP Registry to connect with other state data systems. The workforce study will seek to compile baseline data on the demographics, wages, tenure, and educational characteristics of early care and education professionals. Furthermore, the study will aim to profile the business and program characteristics of programs, including organizational status, participation in various subsidy programs, children served (e.g., numbers, ages, subsidy status, special needs status, dual language learner status). The TAC will identify a Workforce Study Group to identify key survey questions, review workforce study methodologies employed by other states, and identify a vendor through an RFP process.

(D)(2)(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

1. Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and
2. Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

As is presented in Figure D(2)-3, Arkansas has inventoried the current capacity of its workforce and intends to increase the number of aligned institutions and providers from 42 total institutions and providers to 57 total institutions and providers over the course of the RTT–ELC grant. Furthermore, Arkansas plans to increase the number of early childhood educators credentialed by an aligned institution or provider from 6,128 to 7,710—a 25.8% increase—over the course of the grant. In terms of educational levels of the early childhood workforce, as presented in Figure D(2)-4, Arkansas intends to *decrease* the proportion of the workforce that holds only a GED, consistent with research that shows that teachers who attend college tend to offer higher quality early care and education than teachers who have a high school diploma or less.⁸⁵ Arkansas intends to increase the number and proportion of the workforce that have attained credentials and college degrees.

⁸⁵Tout, K., Zaslow, M., & Berry, D. (2006). Quality and qualifications: Links between professional development and quality in early care and education settings. In M. Zaslow, & I. Martinez-Beck (Eds.), *Critical issues in early childhood professional development*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

Figure D(2)-3. Targets for “Aligned” Institutions and Providers.

Performance Measures for (D)(2)(d)(1): Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators receiving credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework					
	Baseline (Today)	Target-end of CY 2014	Target-end of CY 2015	Target-end of CY 2016	Target-end of CY 2017
Total number of “aligned” institutions and providers	11 two year & 6 four year institutions, 25 contractors	15 two year & 8 four year institutions, 25 contractors (plus any newly funded)	17 two year & 9 four year institutions, 25 contractors (plus any newly funded)	19 two year & 10 four year institutions, 25 contractors (plus any newly funded)	21 two year & 11 four year institutions, 25 contractors (plus any newly funded)
Total number of Early Childhood Educators credentialed by an “aligned” institution or provider	6,128	6,300	6,820	7,215	7,710
<i>Source: Arkansas Department of Higher Education</i>					

Figure D(2)-4. Targets for increasing credential levels of early childhood educators.

Performance Measures for (D)(2)(d)(2): Increasing number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.										
Progression of credentials (Aligned to Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework)	<i>Baseline and Annual Targets--Number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who have moved up the progression of credentials, aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, in the prior year</i>									
	Baseline (Today)		Target-end of CY 2014		Target-end of CY 2015		Target-end of CY 2016		Target-end of CY 2017	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
GED	21,537	77.9%	21,000	77.0%	20,488	75.1%	20,101	73.7%	19,614	71.9%
CDA	1,786	6.5%	1,800	6.6%	2,000	7.3%	2,200	8.1%	2,400	8.8%
B–K Credential**	N/A	N/A	20	0.1%	50	0.2%	80	0.3%	110	0.4%
Associate’s Degree***	1,318	4.8%	1,350	4.9%	1,425	5.2%	1,525	5.6%	1,625	6.0%
Bachelor’s Degree****	2,335	8.5%	2,450	9.0%	2,650	9.7%	2,700	9.9%	2,850	10.4%

Performance Measures for (D)(2)(d)(2): Increasing number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.										
Progression of credentials (Aligned to Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework)	<i>Baseline and Annual Targets--Number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who have moved up the progression of credentials, aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, in the prior year</i>									
	Baseline (Today)		Target-end of CY 2014		Target-end of CY 2015		Target-end of CY 2016		Target-end of CY 2017	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Master's Degree*****	626	2.3%	630	2.3%	635	2.3%	640	2.3%	645	2.4%
Doctorate Degree	23	0.1%	25	0.1%	27	0.1%	29	0.1%	31	0.1%
<p><i>*Numbers are based on data from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education.</i></p> <p><i>**B–K credential is slated to be put into effect as of fall 2014; therefore no current data is available</i></p> <p><i>***Associate's degree includes: child care, childhood education AS, early childhood development AAS, early childhood paraprofessional technology, preschool professional, AAS</i></p> <p><i>****Bachelor's degree includes: childhood education BSE, early childhood development BS, elementary education, BSE, family and consumer sciences BS, birth through kindergarten HESC, human development and family sciences BSHEs, human sciences BS, P-4 licensure BSE, professional studies BPS.</i></p> <p><i>*****Master's degree includes: early childhood services MS, early childhood education MSE, early childhood education MSE, human environmental sciences MS, instructional specialist GC, early childhood special education Pre-K–4, GC STEM education for early childhood K–4.</i></p>										

In addition to increasing the overall educational levels of the early care and education workforce, Arkansas strives to encourage a culture of learning and development in which early care and education providers are continuing to seek educational opportunities. Figure D(2)-5 presents data showing the number of providers who progressed across the TAPP Map over the last three years. It should be noted that the AR–BB TQRIS was implemented on July 1, 2010, requiring minimum TAPP levels for administrators and staff. This impetus may account for the large numbers of practitioners moving to higher levels in 2010-2011, moderate numbers in 2011-12, and lower numbers in 2012-2013. Arkansas believes that the proposed reforms and additional supports outlined throughout Section (D) will renew and sustain the amount of movement seen across Competency Levels as depicted in the TAPP MAP seen after the initial reform efforts of establishing the state's TQRIS.

Figure D(2)-5. Number of practitioners demonstrating progression on the TAPP Map 2010 – 2013.

Movement Across TAPP Levels	July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011	July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012	July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013
Entry Level to Foundation 1 < 15 clock hours completed	816	198	163
Foundation 1 to Foundation 2 15-29 clock hours completed	3087	1886	526
Foundation 2 to Foundation 2 30-44 clock hours completed	1823	1186	241
Foundation 2 to Foundation 3 45-134 clock hours completed	1360	1015	215
Foundation 3 to Intermediate 1 135 clock hours or CDA credential or 9 semester hours ECE/CD	441	209	72
Intermediate 1 to Intermediate 2 18 semester hours ECE/CD	225	11	4
Intermediate 2 to Intermediate 3 Associate Degree, 25 semester hours ECE/CD	13	2	0
Intermediate 3 to Advanced 1 Bachelor's Degree, 30 semester hours ECE/CD	5	3	0
Advanced 1 to Advanced 2 Master's or Doctorate, 30 semester hours ECE/CD	6	2	0

High-Quality Plan

The Project 6 (D)(2) Table gives a detailed account of the state's high-quality plan for supporting early childhood educators through professional development efforts. The following is a brief summary of the information presented in the table.

Goals

- D.2.1: Support early childhood educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities
- D.2.2: Implement effective policies and incentives to promote professional improvement
- D.2.3: Report aggregated data on workforce development, advancement, and retention

Activities

- Activities D.2.a.1 to D.2.c.6 (located in the second column) apply to this goal.

Responsible Agencies

- The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education and the TAPP Advisory Committee will collaborate on executing this goal.

Timeline

- Many of these projects will be ongoing throughout the grant period. The workforce study will be completed expeditiously—by the end of 2014—such that it may provide baseline data that will inform other projects (for more details see the fifth column).

Budget

- The budget for supporting and evaluating the status of workforce development competencies is included in the entire Project 6 (Developing a Professional Development System) budget of \$6,400,364. For more specific details, please reference the budget narratives and tables.

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

Project 6 (D)(1) High Quality Plan to develop a Professional Development System					
Goal	Activity	Responsible Agency	Agencies Supporting and Advising	Timeline	Measure of Success
D.2.a Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities	<p>D.2.a.1 TAPP Advisory Committee conducts an assessment of the current status and capacity of trainers</p> <p>D.2.a.2. Identify needed training for trainers in the state</p> <p>D.2.a.3. Offer array of trainings for trainers</p> <p>D.2.a.4. Evaluate and expand current relationship-based professional development approaches (e.g., coaching, mentoring, consultation)</p> <p>D.2.a.5. Develop a guide for administrators on how to implement in-house mentor/coaching</p> <p>D.2.a.6 Professional Development Advisors support administrator</p>	DCCECE	<p>Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Developmental Disabilities</p>	September 2014 – December 2017	<p>Completed workforce study of trainers in the state</p> <p>Additional trainings provided to trainers</p> <p>Expanded coaching and mentoring</p>

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

	<p>mentor/coaching within program</p> <p>D.2.a.7. Engage in video-based coaching pilot for providers in rural communities.</p> <p>D.2.a.8. Establish regional training facilities at 10 model sites.</p>				
<p>D.2.b. Implementing effective policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) to promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway</p>	<p>D.2.b.1 Track the utilization of Bonus Awards and professional development grants by AR–BB programs</p> <p>D.2.b.2 Make modifications to the dissemination of professional development funds as needed based on results</p> <p>D.2.b.3 Through contract with IHE expand the Arkansas Early Childhood Scholarship program</p>	DCCECE	<p>Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Developmental Disabilities, Institutes of Higher Education</p>	January 2014 – December 2017	<p>Reports to document the use of Bonus awards and grants and expanded scholarship program for staff</p>
<p>D.2.c Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and</p>	<p>D.2.c.1. Through an RFP process identify a vendor to conduct a workforce study</p>	DCCECE	<p>Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of</p>	June 2014 – December 2015	<p>Completed workforce study</p> <p>Revised TAPP</p>

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

<p>retention</p>	<p>and complete workforce study</p> <p>D.2.c.2. Review and enhance TAPP Registry enrollment procedures</p> <p>D.2.c.3 Identify additional data elements to profile practitioners who enrolled in the TAPP registry (e.g. staff turnover, retention, etc.)</p> <p>D.2.c.4.Explore the feasibility of aligning TAPP registry data with the SLDS</p> <p>D.2.c.5 Develop a review process for verifying trainer qualifications and registering trainings in the TAPP registry</p> <p>D.2.c.6. Expand and reformat the Better Beginnings website to make available information on the status of the state’s early childhood workforce.</p>		<p>Development Disabilities Services; Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Developmental Disabilities, Institutes of Higher Education</p>		<p>registry data system tied to the SLDS</p> <p>Revised TAPP processes for enrollment and verification</p> <p>Revised AR-BB website</p>
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E(1) Measuring Outcomes and Progress

Since 2004, Arkansas has had a fully implemented Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) system funded through the Arkansas Department of Education. The state is proposing through this RTT–ELC grant to build off of the current infrastructure to develop a national model for KEA. The revised KEA will conform to the National Research Council’s recommendations on assessment and address all of the essential domains of school readiness with psychometrically strong assessment practices appropriate for all children, including the state’s growing Latino and English Language Learner populations. Below the strengths and weakness of the state’s current KEA are discussed, as well as our high-quality plan to become a national leader in KEA.

As evidenced in Section (A)(2), the data derived from the state’s KEA can paint a powerful picture of the school readiness gaps that exist in the state and can also provide information on the developmental level of individual children to inform instruction in kindergarten. In 2012, the Arkansas Department of Education convened an advisory committee with statewide leaders in early childhood, K–12, and higher education along with national consultants from the National Institute for Early Education Research’s Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes to re-examine the state’s definition of kindergarten readiness. After a review of the latest research in child development and early learning, and gathering input from stakeholders, the advisory committee created a new definition of school readiness and a new set of indicators that cover the essential domains of school readiness. The definition and indicators were approved in an October of 2013 meeting of the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission and are included as Appendix E.1. As discussed below, one motivation for the revision of the state’s current KEA is that it does not address these new indicators, particularly in the areas of physical and social/emotional development.

(E)(1)(a) KEA aligned with the State’s Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness

Foundations of the KEA System in Arkansas

Assessing children at kindergarten entry for specific indicators of school readiness is required by law in Arkansas. Legislative Act 825 enacted by the Arkansas General Assembly in 2003 required that the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) define "kindergarten readiness." ADE was required to prepare a list of skills and knowledge that influence a child’s ability to access and benefit from kindergarten learning experiences, with the purpose of assisting parents in building these learning foundations. The list of skills and knowledge that was created was called the *Kindergarten Readiness*

Indicators Checklist (KRIC) consisting of 38 skills that align with the state’s early learning and development standards.

At the same time, the legislation also required that the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE) provide copies of the KRIC to licensed child care facilities. This coordinated effort between ADE and DCCECE sought to ensure that parents, early childhood educators, and kindergarten teachers were consistent in their understanding of school readiness and working in tandem to develop and build upon the school readiness skills deemed the most important building blocks for children’s success in kindergarten and beyond.

With “kindergarten readiness” defined and further specified through the KRIC, and both early childhood educators and Kindergarten teachers aware of (and working toward) the state’s school readiness definition, the state began implementation of a “uniform school readiness screening” for all kindergarten children in the 2004–2005 school year as required by Arkansas statute. State guidance accompanying the assessment makes clear that the results are not to be used to determine special education referral, to discourage placement in transitional classes, to evaluate preschool programs, or to evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction of a teacher. Rather, they are to be used to:

1. Describe the developmental level of a student;
2. Provide teachers with supplemental information or snapshot of a child’s skills upon entering kindergarten;
3. Describe certain learning-related behaviors of students with special needs and those whose first language is not English;
4. Assist in identifying students who might be at-risk due to delayed development;
5. Support instructional planning for individual students and/or groups; and,
6. Assist the state in better preparing entering kindergarten students.

As such, the KEA is used in conformance with the recommendations of the National Research Council⁸⁶ report on early childhood. This guidance will not change with the implementation of the new KEA instrument.

⁸⁶National Research Council. (2008). *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How*. Committee on Developmental Outcomes and Assessments for Young Children, C.E. Snow and S.B. Van Hemel, Editors. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Board on Testing and Assessment, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12446.

Arkansas' Current Kindergarten Entry Assessment System

Arkansas' current Kindergarten Entry Assessment instrument is the *Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI)*⁸⁷, (See Appendix E-1.2) which has been used since KEA was legislatively mandated in 2004. School districts administer the *QELI* to all children entering kindergarten during late August and early September of the school year.⁸⁸ Teachers complete the *QELI* based on observations of students made over time in a naturalistic setting. Using the *QELI*, teachers observe and record information about knowledge, skills, and behaviors in six key areas:

1. General Knowledge;
2. Oral Communication;
3. Written Language;
4. Math Concepts;
5. Work Habits; and,
6. Attentive Behavior.

As is clear from the list above, the *QELI* does not measure two of the essential domains of school readiness: physical well-being/motor development and social emotional development. This is a significant weakness of the current KEA that will be addressed in the revised system. Each of that areas that are addressed in *QELI* contains a number of indicators, which are analyzed for each child, and result in an assessment of the child being *delayed*, *developing*, or *developed* for each domain area.

Arkansas' new KEA will assess all essential domains of school readiness, including social/emotional development and physical development in addition to those already measured.

(E)(1)(b) Valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and purpose

The *QELI* inventory was developed to be appropriate for all students, including those children with special needs and English-language learners. The norming sample included 2,108 kindergarten children in 47 states representing 217 school districts and 392 classrooms.⁸⁹ Internal-consistency reliability estimates of the each of the six scales of the instrument are high and range from $\alpha=.81$ for General Knowledge to $\alpha=.93$ for Attentive Behavior. Concurrent validity of the instrument, computed as correlations between *QELI* scores and scores on the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* for Kindergarten students

⁸⁷Qualls, A.L., Hoover, H.D., Dunbar, S.B. & Frisbie, D.A. (2003). *Qualls Early Learning Inventory*. Itasca, NY: Riverside Publishing.

⁸⁸ This is a definitional element of KEA as defined by the RTT-ELC application. As such, the current KEA system meets this this KEA requirement.

⁸⁹ Qualls, A.L., Dunbar, S.B. Hoover, H.D., & Frisbie, D.A. (2003). *Qualls Early Learning Inventory K-1 Edition: Teacher's Directions and Interpretive Guide*. Itasca, NY: Riverside Publishing.

in the spring of the school year, are low to moderate with correlations ranging from .20 to .57 between scales.⁹⁰⁹¹ Along with these relatively low current validity coefficients, the psychometric properties of the tool for English Language Learners are unclear, despite the publisher's claim that it is appropriate for this population.

To decrease variability in ratings between teachers, teachers are provided the *QELI Teacher's Directions and Interpretive Guide* annually. This document assists teachers in preparing and conducting *QELI* observations and helps them understand instructional options for supporting children's growth in areas where children are not development. In addition, early childhood and K–12 groups collaboratively developed the *KRIC Instructional LINK for Teachers and Parents* (see Appendix E-1.2 and E-1.3). The *LINK for Teachers* and the *LINK for Parents* present the kindergarten readiness indicators and provide a number of examples of observable behaviors. The *LINK for Teachers* supports the reliability and validity of the assessments by guiding educators in making informed, focused observations of each child and provides a basis for assigning a rating (*not developed*, *developing*, or *developed*) for the child's level of attainment on each indicator. The support document also demonstrates the alignment between benchmarks contained in the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (*QELI*), the Arkansas Early Childhood Education Frameworks, Work Sampling Performance Indicators used by state-funded pre-kindergarten programs (ABC), Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, and K–12 ADE Frameworks, illustrating the cohesive and integrated system across educational auspices and programs. Given Arkansas' adoption of the Common Core Standards in 2010 (implementation of K–12 standards being phased in from 2011–2013), minor revisions to the Arkansas Early Childhood Education Frameworks and to *LINK* publications were completed to maintain alignment between early childhood and K–12 standards.

Building teachers' professional capacity in this way will translate to the adoption of a new KEA instrument that allows for a more comprehensive picture of children's development and has superior psychometric properties to the *QELI*.

The *LINK* is used by early childhood and kindergarten teachers. Pre-K teachers can use the *LINK* in a formative manner, using assessment results to help appropriately plan and scaffold children's learning experiences in a way that is tailored to each child's current developmental level and instructional needs,

⁹⁰Hoover, H.D., Dunbar, S.B., & Frisbie, D.A. (2003). Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. Itasca, NY: Riverside Publishing

⁹¹ One would not necessarily expect this correlation to be high given that the assessment scores are from beginning and end of the kindergarten year. One would hope that the instruction that takes place during the year would have an impact on student achievement thus ensuring the assessment scores of the child are necessarily predictive of the end of the year scores, particularly in cases where those scores are low at the beginning of the year.

thus facilitating children’s development of skills that will help them learn and succeed in kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers can use the *LINK* in a similar formative manner and transfer the information they recorded into the state’s existing KEA.

The high-quality plan for the new KEA instrument in Arkansas will require stronger psychometric properties and specific evidence that the instrument accurately assesses children who are English Language Learners, children with disability, and children from rural areas.

(E)(1)(c) Is administered no later than the fourth year of the grant

As discussed in the timeline for the high-quality plan below, the new KEA will be administered to all children who enter public school beginning in 2016-17 school year, which is the fourth year of the grant. Piloting and phase-in of the new assessment tool will begin in the 2015-16 school year.

(E)(1)(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if separate from the SLDS

In addition to teachers using *QELI* data in a formative way to gather information on individual children’s developmental progress and plan instructional experiences accordingly, *QELI* data is also aggregated at the state level and is included in the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) managed by the Arkansas Research Center (ARC) at Arkansas State University. Data from early childhood data system is incorporated into the SLDS with the KEA data.

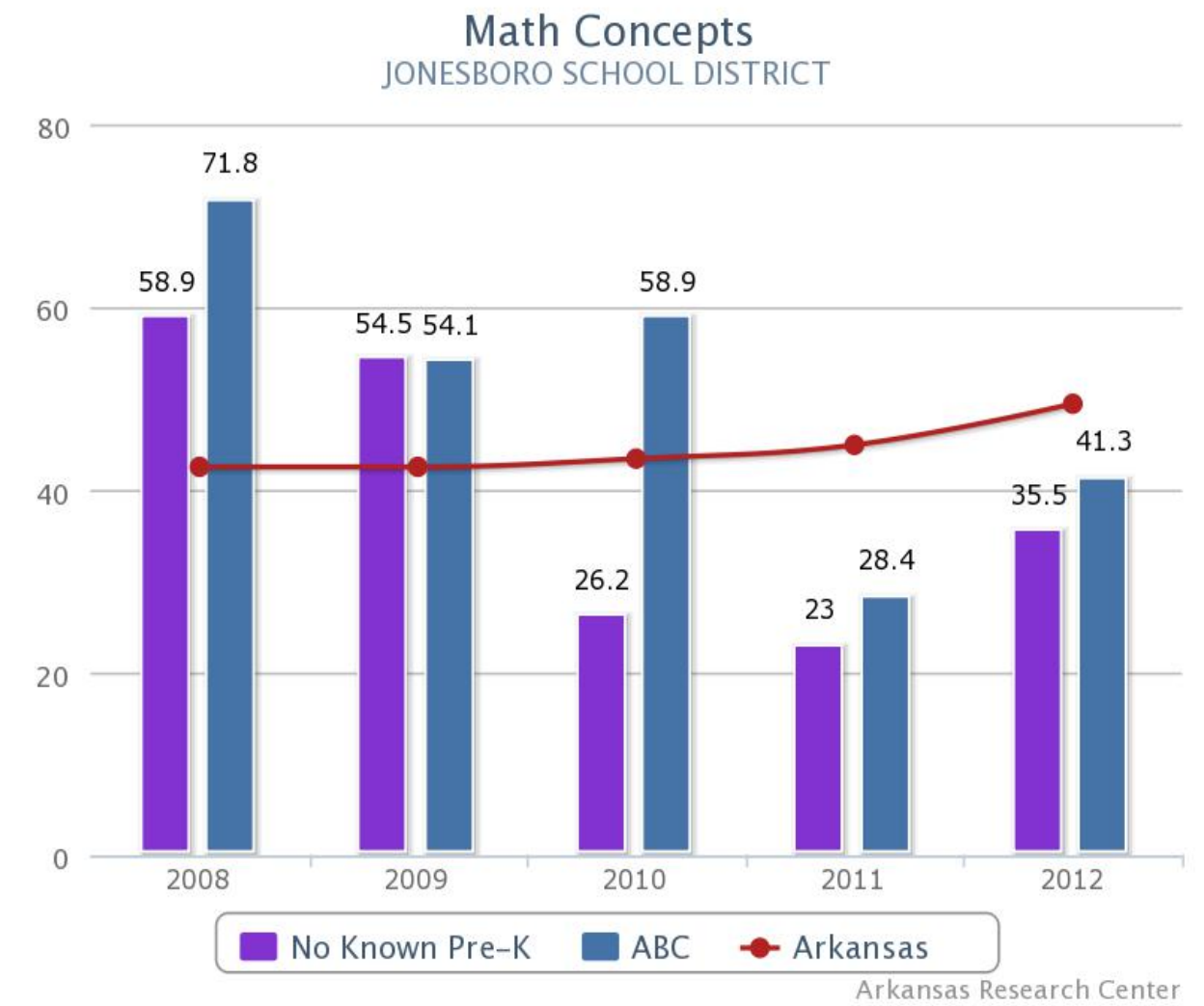
In the aggregate, the KEA data can be used for a variety of purposes, including as a means of evaluating program effectiveness at the state level with the goal of improving the quality of care and educational environments. For example, the Arkansas Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education makes use of the *QELI* data annually to examine the impact of the Arkansas state-funded pre-K program. A report prepared by the Arkansas Research Center (2011) that combined *QELI* data from school years 2008–2010 demonstrated that children with high needs who participated in ABC programs had consistently higher *QELI* scores than their non-participating peers across all subscales.⁹²

Furthermore, data is available directly to program providers who can integrate this data into program improvement efforts. For instance, using the Arkansas Research Center QuickLooks webpage (<http://arc.arkansas.gov/quicklooks/>), a program director of a state-funded ABC program can examine the *QELI* scores of children from their programs compared to those of free/reduced lunch students entering kindergarten across the state of Arkansas. Figure E.1 provides an example of the functionality

⁹²Arkansas Research Center (2011). Pre-K Participation and Resulting Academic Achievement in the Early Grades: An Examination of Arkansas’ Better Chance Program 2008-2010.

of the reporting system. The data system allows any interested party to look at individual school district KEA result for each domain by child's participation in the state's pre-kindergarten program and compare them to state averages. Using this system, a director of a program can assess the relative strengths and weaknesses and determine where additional supports for teachers in a particular program may be needed and develop customized professional development plans that efficiently maximize resources.

The results from the new KEA instrument will be reported to the SLDS in the same way and will have the same functionality in generating reports.



(E)(1)(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant

Given that the KEA is legislatively mandated in Arkansas, the state already commits state financial resources for KEA implementation and the reporting of results through the state data system. The state commits \$162,000 per year to the actual administration of the KEA and provides additional financial resources to the Arkansas Research Center for the implementation of the QuickLooks system.

High Quality Plan for the New Kindergarten Entry Assessment

Arkansas is embarking on a revision of its KEA and has created a high-quality plan to use RTT–ELC funding to build upon the foundation of the state’s KEA. The state will:

1. Purchase and adapt a new KEA instrument that addresses all of the essential domains of school readiness
2. Ensure that the KEA instrument and any adaptations or supplements to the instrument have strong assessment properties, for all children (ELL, children with disabilities, and children in rural areas) and the level of training necessary to achieve reliable and valid assessment results
3. Develop teacher and parent-friendly reports, and data feed-back loops to teachers so they can use the KEA data more effectively in support instruction
4. Provide training for kindergarten teachers on how to implement the assessment and use the results for curriculum planning
5. Continue to foster cross-systems integration that strengthens the connection between early childhood and kindergarten programs by highlighting the consistency and continuity between the KEA instrument, early learning standards, and the formative assessments used in early childhood programs

Arkansas’ implementation of the *QELI* provides a strong foundation for KEA improvements. The state has a strong KEA infrastructure, including the professional capacity to implement a KEA, training protocols and materials, an established link to SLDS data systems, reporting tools, as well as state funding. The high-quality plan will also build on continuity that has been established between the early education and K-12 systems through the alignment of standards, as well as the common resources that are provided to kindergarten teachers, early childhood educators, and parents.

Implementation overview

Table E.1 provides a detailed outline of the steps that will be undertaken to implement a new KEA for the state. While the early learning standards are being revised in year one of the RTT–ELC grant, the

state will conduct a study in preparation for the new KEA that solicits input from kindergarten teachers and other stakeholders about the revision. The state will also form a Kindergarten Entry Assessment Committee to provide expert guidance on work.

In year two of the RTT–ELC grant, the state will select an assessment instrument through an RFP process. Stakeholders and assessment experts that are part of KEA committee will develop and score the RFP to ensure the most appropriate instrument is chosen for the state. The committee will create the criteria for selection, which will include at minimum:

In year three, upon choosing the instrument training materials will be developed and the KEA piloted. Professional development will be offered in the pilot sites to educators (i.e., teachers and administrators) working with early childcare programs and K–3 classrooms to provide information and training on the standards, how to interpret assessment scores, and the implications for children and programs at each stage of child development. The trainings will be offered locally to encourage educators in a community to jointly attend. Data system work will also take place to be able to accept the data from the new KEA instrument and new reporting tools will be devised

In year four of the RTT–ELG grant, any refinements to the assessment tool and trainings will be scaled statewide. In addition, the Arkansas Research Center will work on the integration of the new data into the state data system and the reporting functionality in QuickLooks.

Responsible party

The Division of Child Care and Early Education will be responsible part for the implementation of a new KEA with support from the Arkansas Department of Education, Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Head Start Collaboration Office, the Kindergarten Entry Assessment committee and the stakeholder community.

High-Quality Plan

The Project 7 (E)(1) Table gives a detailed account of the state’s high-quality plan for revising Arkansas’ KEA system. The following is a brief summary of the information presented in the table.

Goals

- E.1.1: Engage in a process for choosing new KEA instrument
- E.1.2: Develop training module and provide training to kindergarten teachers
- E.1.3: Strengthen use of assessments by early learning and kindergarten staff and administrators

- E.1.4: Take technical steps necessary to integrate data from new KEA instrument into SLDS and QuickLooks

Activities

- Activities E.1.1 to E.1.4 (located in the second column) apply to this goal.

Responsible Agencies

- The Division of Child Care and the Arkansas Department of Education will collaborate on executing this goal.

Timeline

- The approved tool and trainings will be finalized by the end of 2015 (for more details see the fifth column).

Budget

- The budget for revising the KEA system (Project 7) is \$2,975,000. For more specific details, please reference the budget narratives and tables.

E.1. High Quality Plan for Revising Arkansas' Kindergarten Entry Assessment					
Goal	Activity	Responsible Agency	Agencies Supporting and Advising	Timeline	Measure of Success
E.1.1 Engage in process for choosing a new KEA instrument	E.1.1.a. Create advisory committee on KEA (will utilize Advisory Committee for Early Assessments from Project C.2)	ADE, DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services; Advisory Committee for Early Learning formative assessments (Project C.2.1)	Publish approved assessment tool by June 2015	On-time and on-budget Assessment selected is psychometrically sound, valid and reliable, appropriate for all students including those with delays and English language learners
	E.1.1.b. Issue RFP for contractor to facilitate advisory committee process				
	E.1.1.c. Establish criteria to vet assessment new KEA instrument				
	E.1.1.d. Host stakeholder meetings to gather feedback on criteria				
	E.1.1.e. Engage in vetting process and publish approved assessment tool				
E.1.2 Develop training modules and provide professional development and coaching to Kindergarten teachers	E.1.2.a Create training module for assessment instrument	ADE, DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services	Training modules by December 2015	On-time and on-budget Modules created for assessment tool
	E.1.2.b Develop module about discussing assessment results with parents				
	E.1.2.c Conduct training sessions with Kindergarten teachers and school administrators				

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Application

	E.1.3.a Develop “cross training” module about using the assessment to inform instruction at the individual and classroom level				
E.1.3 Strengthen the use of the assessments by Early Learning and Kindergarten staff and administrators	E.1.3.a Develop “cross training” on effective uses of Arkansas Research Centers’ (SLDS) QuickLooks on how it data can be used to inform program and school decisions	ADE, DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services	Finalized training by January 2016	On-time and on-budget Broad utilization of training modules
	E.1.4.b Train Early Learning and Kindergarten staff and administrators at School Readiness Network Meetings and Conferences				
E.1.4 Take technical steps necessary to integrate data from new KEA instrument into SLDS and QuickLooks	E.1.4.a Build a customized portal for data collection that will speak between PreK and K-12 systems.	ADE, DCCECE	Head Start State Collaboration Office; Arkansas Early Childhood Commission; Division of Development Disabilities Services	June 2015-December 2015	Data collection portal developed Reports developed QuickLooks platform for new KEA completed and usable
	E.1.4.b Design reports to reflect student progress prior to entering Kindergarten.				
	E.1.4.c Expand Arkansas research Center’s Quicklooks system to include new KEA.				
	E.1.5.a Build a customized portal for data collection that will speak between PreK and K-12 systems.				

Priority 2: Competitive Preference Priority -- Including All Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. (10 points)

a. A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs

As discussed in Section A, prior to 2013, Arkansas had some of the weakest licensing regulations in the country, but the country's best monitoring system. The *Child Care Aware* report ranked Arkansas 49th in the quality of its program standards, but first in the oversight of those standards.⁹³ Currently, Arkansas licenses programs and providers that offer care for a fee for six or more unrelated children in the provider's setting. While a change of these licensing rules requires a change by the legislature, the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE) is actively working to increase the number of licensed providers in the state.

The new licensing standards that will be implemented in 2014 year will hold regulated programs to a significantly higher standard of care. In addition to the higher standards, DCCECE is working to bring more providers not subject to licensing into the licensing system by incentivizing participation. DCCECE is working on a pilot project that provides grants to infant and toddler programs and family child care homes in rural areas if they voluntarily agree to be a part of the regulated system.

b. A TQRIS in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate

One of the positive implications of Arkansas' significantly stronger licensing requirements is that the new regulations represent a significantly higher level of program quality than what is represented by the lowest level of the state's current TQRIS. As such, the state has addressed in its high quality plan in B (1) how it will incorporate the new licensing requirements as the new lowest level of the state's TQRIS. The state will then build stronger program standard progressions of quality using the licensing standards as the foundation. Licensed programs will receive an automatic Level I rating under the revised TQRIS system. While a program or provider will have to apply to move up the TQRIS, it will be treated as part of the TQRIS system. For example, parents searching the *Arkansas Bright Beginnings* website for providers will find every licensed provider with a TQRIS rating. Regardless of whether programs and providers choose to move up the TQRIS, the automatic participation provides a "touch point" for the state to engage these programs and providers and talk with them about quality. The new

⁹³ Child Care Aware of America. *We Can Do Better: Child Care Aware of America's Ranking of State Child Care Center Regulations and Oversight. 2013.*

requirement will ensure that every licensed provider is aware of the TQRIS system and has accurate information regarding the supports that are available.

Priority 4: Competitive Preference Priority -- Creating Preschool through Third Grade Approaches to Sustain Improved Early Learning Outcomes through the Early Elementary Grades. (10 points)

Findings from the 2010 Head Start Impact Study reveal a significant area of concern for those engaged in early childhood systems reform. The study found that while Head Start programs nationally produced impacts across a number of outcome measures, there was no difference in outcomes between children in the treatment and control groups after one year of kindergarten. Further, as expected, when these children were examined again at the end of third grade, there continued to be no difference between Head Start children and children in the control group.⁹⁴ These findings are consistent with other research in the field that has shown that the positive long-term effects of Head Start, such as better graduation rates, earnings and health outcomes, are moderated by the quality of children's subsequent educational experiences. In short, the advantages gained by high quality early education can be undone by lackluster early elementary settings.⁹⁵

The response from the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services to the Head Start Impact Study findings was clear and intuitive: early education reform efforts need to produce stronger outcomes for children with high needs as they enter kindergarten, and the quality of early elementary grades must be improved to sustain the gains made as the result of a strong early childhood system.

Arkansas takes a similar perspective and has been working on impactful early childhood and K-12 systems reform that creates greater continuity between the two systems. In a state where a majority of the children are high needs, Arkansas recognizes that all structural and policy efforts made through the RTT –ELC grant are not enough to set children on a fundamentally different life trajectory. As such, the reforms initiated as part of this grant are part of a continuum of high-quality intervention efforts that span from preschool through the early elementary years.

⁹⁴Puma, m., Bell, S., Cook, R., Heid, C., Broene, P., Jenkins, F., Mashburn, A. & Downer, J. (2012). Third Grade Follow-up to the Head Start Impact Study Final Report, OPRE Report # 2012-45, Washington, D.C.; Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration on Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

⁹⁵Johnson, R. (2010) School Quality and the Long-run Effects of Head Start. Working Paper. Berkeley, CA; Goldman School of Public Policy

(a) Enhancing and aligning the State’s kindergarten-through-third-grade standards

The Arkansas Early Learning and Development Standards are vertically aligned with the state’s K -12 standards and common core. Once the new revisions to ELDS are in place the state will continue the practice of aligning with K – 12 and common core. Training opportunities to present the ELDS and demonstrate the alignment will be conducted for early care and education practitioners and elementary school teachers and administrators. (See section C1)

(b) Health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs from preschool through third grade, and building families’ capacity to address these needs

(c) Implementing teacher preparation and professional development programs and strategies

The state will implement professional development and joint training opportunities that are offered to early childhood practitioners and elementary school teachers in the areas of Early Learning Development Standards, appropriate uses of formative assessment and Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) to individualize instruction. In addition, training that promotes positive behavioral supports such as training on *Conscious Discipline* and family engagement strategies will also be offered to educators in the elementary grades through regional trainings. (See Section C2, D2 and E1)

(d) Implementing model systems of collaboration

Implementing the Early Childhood Community Collaboratives (ECCC) will promote interagency collaboration between Early Learning and Development Programs and elementary schools. A key goal will be to link early childhood educators with kindergarten educators. ECCCs will be a resource for parents and will promote parent involvement and engaging families in early childhood and into the elementary school grades. The ECCCs will also focus on all transitions for children across the birth through third grade continuum. The Collaboratives will establish yearly meetings to discuss the effective uses of data across early child care programs and K – 3 elementary school grades. (See Section D1)

(e) Building or enhancing data systems to monitor the status of children’s learning and development from preschool through third grade

The State Longitudinal Data System already meets all 10 essential elements outlined in the Data Quality Campaign. To expand the number of Pre-K children whose records are available in the SLDS, ABC currently sends ADE the full roster of Pre-K information twice a year. The data includes demographics, screening-related information, and the teacher and paraprofessional education profiles. A unique id is generated for each Pre K student enrolled in ABC. In addition, all data related to KEA is

included in the SLDS (See E1). Arkansas Research Center has developed a “Quick Looks” system that allows any interested party the opportunity to look at aggregated *QELI* results by year and program for different categories of children. With 11 percent of the state’s three-year-olds and 37 percent of the state’s 4-year-olds enrolled in Pre K, the state recognizes that this effort in gathering data on ABC children is an *initial start* to creating a true P -12 longitudinal data system. It is hoped that the screening and early-intervention data will assist the state in understanding the long term effectiveness of ABC early care and education programs and track children’s development and progress through third grade and beyond.

(f) Other efforts designed to increase the percentage of children who are able to read and do mathematics at grade level by the end of the third grade.

The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, in close collaboration with Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, has launched the Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (AR-GLR) to ensure that more of our low-income children succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship. The Campaign focuses on one of the most important predictors of school success and high school graduation—grade-level reading by the end of third grade. The goal is that, by 2020, all Arkansas children will read at grade level by the end of third grade. AR-GLR is part of the National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, a collaborative effort by foundations, nonprofit partners, states and communities across the nation. AR-GLR focuses on four key areas that the research shows impact grade-level reading: school readiness, chronic absence, summer learning loss, and parent and community engagement. WRF has made grants in three communities - Marvell-Elaine, Pulaski County, and Springdale - to partnerships between nonprofits and school districts addressing one or more of these areas. AR-GLR is also working with eight school districts to address the issue of chronic absence in the early grades.

Other innovations:

- The state’s Smart Arkansas Initiative is the integration of curriculum, standards, assessment, and accountability, created to furnish all educators the basis and resources for high quality instruction from *pre-kindergarten through graduation*. Funded through the Department of Education, the Smart Arkansas continuum is a comprehensive system of reform initiatives that is correlated to professional development, and implemented with consistency in all schools throughout the state. A student in the most remote rural area of the state can be assured of

access to the same curriculum and high standards as students in urban settings. Smart Arkansas Initiative provides a platform in which to align professional development, assessment and curriculum efforts along a continuum from preschool to early elementary grades. Pre K teachers within school districts benefit in participating in this program. Approximately 50 percent of the ABC programs and teachers participate in Smart Arkansas Initiative and access to electronic resources through the instructional improvement system (IIS).

- The Arkansas Out of School Network (AOSN) is one of 38 statewide afterschool networks working to promote an expansion of school-based and school linked afterschool programs serving children and youth ages 5-19. AOSN's mission is to create safe, healthy and enriching experiences for Arkansas youth during out of school times. The Network was formed in 2005 as a result of a grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and fiscal support from key Partners and is a sponsored initiative of Arkansas State University's Childhood Services. The Network serves as a vehicle to bring together key stakeholders and has an array of partners who have committed staff, resources, and technical assistance to support afterschool programs. AOSN's work is currently organized into four main categories: Program Quality, Professional Development, Communication and Public Education, and Finance and Resource Development, and Public Education. Using recommendations developed by the 2008 Governor's Task Force on Best Practices for After-school and Summer Programs, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Education, AOSN, and local service providers have worked together to establish quality standards, licensing requirements, professional development trainings, and evaluation methods needed to operate quality programs in the state of Arkansas in recent years.
- School-age programs that serve children before school, after school and during the summer break are eligible for AR- BB TQRIS participation. School-age programs are rated at Levels 1, 2, and 3 ratings and are rewarded with the same incentives as early childhood programs. Coaching and technical assistance are offered at no cost to providers. Like the early childhood TQRIS standards, the school-age standards address five components: Administration, Staff Qualifications and Professional Development, Learning Environment, Environmental Assessment, and Youth Health & Development. Environmental Quality of the school-age programs is assessed using either the *School-Age Care Environment Rating*,⁹⁶ most often used in

⁹⁶Harms, T., E. Vineberg Jacobs, et al. (1996).School-Age Environment Rating Scale. New York, NY, Teachers College Press.

programs that also provide early childhood education and are also being assessed with the Environment Rating Scales, or the *Youth Program Quality Assessment*,⁹⁷ most often used in programs that only serve school-age children. According to current data 10 percent of the licensed school age programs participate in Better Beginnings.

Priority 5: Competitive Preference Priority -- Addressing the Needs of Children in Rural Areas. (5 points)

As discussed in Section A, Arkansas is a rural state, which creates a particularly complex set of service delivery challenges. Sixty-two of the state's 75 counties are "rural" as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Roughly, 44 percent of the state's population lives in these rural counties and 11 percent of the state's children overall are rural poor. Twenty-three percent of the children who live in rural areas live in poverty. These children represent such a large portion of the children with high needs in Arkansas that they are not thought of as special population, but are instead at the center state's early childhood systems thinking.

Accordingly, all of the state approaches to early childhood systems reform are designed to close educational and opportunity gaps for rural children with high needs, increase the number and percentage of low income children who are enrolled in high-quality early learning and development programs, and enhance the State's integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and services.

Examples of current state efforts to support rural children, as well as those proposed as part of the state's high-quality plan include:

- ***The prevalence of Home Visiting as a service delivery model:*** In total, over 6,700 children are served through the state's home visiting programs. This includes over 5,000 children in the *Arkansas Better Chance* pre-Kindergarten program who are served through a home-based option (HIPPI and *Parents as Teachers*) to ensure children in rural areas receive the benefits of the pre-Kindergarten program.
- ***Meeting the needs of rural children through a telehealth pilot:*** Arkansas views the opportunity to pilot telehealth services for rural children within the context of the early learning and development system as a "game changer." This pilot will leverage a \$102 million grant from the National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA)

⁹⁷ Adams, K., Brickman, N., & McMahon, T. (2005). *Youth Program Quality Assessment, Form A*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

within the Department of Commerce for a rural telecommunications infrastructure to pilot telehealth services, where appropriate, for early identification and intervention services. These services will be comparable to those provided through traditional on-site modalities, but with increased capacity to reach children in underserved, rural communities. If successful, the pilot would be beginning of strategic partnership between the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education and the state's telehealth community to develop our a system where early learning and development programs receive a host of health and mental health related supports through a telehealth model.

- ***Family Engagement:*** The state's family engagement plan outlines the creation of State Early Learning Parent Policy Council aligned with 15 local education cooperatives. One goal of the Council is to create peer networks of families with high-needs children in rural areas.
- ***Communicating about the state TQRIS:*** The TQRIS communication plan as part of *Arkansas Better Beginnings* outreach focuses specifically on engaging rural providers and families with young children.
- ***Professional Development for Rural providers:*** Section D outlines regional training venue model, distance learning, and video coaching to support the state's early childhood educators in rural areas.
- ***Rural Implementation Specialist:*** Section A discusses how the state will hire a specialist to ensure effective implementation of grant projects in rural areas.

These initiatives are designed to support rural providers and the children that they serve. They have been endorsed by major rural stakeholders, including the Arkansas Rural Education Association and the Arkansas Rural Community Alliance.

BUDGET PART I: SUMMARY**Budget part I –Tables**

Budget Table I-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--*The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.*

Overall Statewide Budget Budget Table I-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS/DCCECE>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	243,082	243,082	243,082	243,082	972,328
2. Fringe Benefits	77,786	77,786	77,786	77,786	311,145
3. Travel	19,500	19,500	19,500	19,500	78,000
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	2,000	10,000	10,000	5,000	27,000
6. Contractual	7,196,197	9,069,209	9,692,667	8,983,454	34,941,527
7. Training Stipends	12,500	12,500	12,500	12,500	50,000
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	7,551,065	9,432,077	10,055,535	9,341,322	36,380,000
10. Indirect Costs*	180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000	720,000
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	400,000
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	7,831,065	9,712,077	10,335,535	9,621,322	37,500,000

Overall Statewide Budget Budget Table I-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS/DCCECE>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	15,410,213	15,410,213	15,410,213	15,410,213	61,640,852
15. Total Statewide Budget (add lines 13-14)	23,241,278	25,122,290	25,745,748	25,031,535	99,140,852
<u>Overall Structure</u> <p>The Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE), has a strong history of fiscal management and oversight of federally funded and other State supported programs including CCDF-funded and other quality programs to ensure that programs are monitored and in alignment with Common Core Standards. DCCECE will serve as the State fiscal agent and will oversee implementation of the Race to the Top grant. DCCECE will work closely with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, the Arkansas Department of Education, as well as Early Childhood Commission, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners. DCCECE staff will monitor and track all program activities and expenditures to be sure they are in accordance with the State Plan.</p> <p>The budget emphasizes development of the infrastructure needed to carry out the project along with accountability and establishment of high-quality programs that promote early learning standards that align with Core Standards, and development of a workforce that can translate evidence-based activities into practice.</p>					

Budget Table I-2: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.

Overall Statewide Budget Budget Table I-2: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS/DCCECE>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
DHS	22,591,278	22,597,290	23,220,748	22,756,535	91,165,852
Dept of Higher Ed	500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	5,000,000
Dept of Education	150,000	1,025,000	1,025,000	775,000	2,975,000
Total Statewide Budget	23,241,278	25,122,290	25,745,748	25,031,535	99,140,852
<p>List of Participating Agencies</p> <p>Arkansas Department of Human Services will serve as the fiscal agent for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge in collaboration with the partners listed below and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Arkansas Department of Higher Education – The Department of Human Services will partner with the Department of Higher Education to administer scholarships to early childhood professionals who are obtaining certification, credentials or licensure in alignment with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p> <p>Arkansas Department of Education – The Department of Human Services will partner with the Department of Education to review and research a new KEA instrument that will include all the essential domains of school readiness.</p>					

Budget Table I-3: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--*The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.*

Overall Statewide Budget Budget Table I-3: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS/DCCECE>					
Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1	1,114,868	1,114,868	1,114,868	1,114,868	4,459,473
2	18,970,765	19,009,469	19,068,614	18,818,167	75,867,015
3	153,750	128,750	128,750	128,750	540,000
4	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	4,655,000
5	569,000	569,000	1,109,000	1,109,000	3,356,000
6	897,145	1,889,453	1,913,766	1,700,000	6,400,364
7	372,000	1,247,000	1,247,000	997,000	3,863,000
Total Statewide Budget	23,241,278	25,122,290	25,745,748	25,031,535	99,140,852
<p>The following projects are planned:</p> <p>Project 1: A1 Create Race to the Top Administrative Structure and Implementation Team</p> <p>Six positions are requested to support the infrastructure necessary for project oversight, implementation and monitoring.</p> <p>Project 2: B1, 2, 3, 4, 5 High-Quality Plan for the Revision and Alignment of Arkansas' Better Beginnings Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</p> <p>An RFP will be developed to conduct a validation study to be conducted. An Assessment Tool will be identified for implementation. DCCECE Staff, coaches and mentors throughout the state will receive training on standards and assessment tools. An independent researcher will also conduct an outcomes study on the level of quality using Arkansas' Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. Secondary data will be collected and extracted from workforce, state data systems, and program records.</p> <p>Project 3: C1 Early Learning Development Standards</p> <p>The Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education will identify the ELDS Project Team and team lead to implement the identified grant activities.</p>					

Overall Statewide Budget
Budget Table I-3: Participating State Agency
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))
<DHS/DCCECE>

Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
<p>Arkansas will use Race to the Top funds to hire a facilitator hold public forums and distributions of surveys for vetting the early learning development standards during the revision and alignment process, and drafting summary reports</p> <p>Project 4: C2 High-Quality Plan for Expanding Arkansas' Comprehensive Assessment System</p> <p>A new screening and assessment tool that will be implemented in the state. An interagency agreement will be established to conduct professional development training for child care providers. Using the UAMS Telehealth network, a pilot test will be performed to promote training of child care providers in rural communities for mental health, vision, hearing, and developmental delays. Professional development contractors will be used to expand the number of trainers educated on CLASS and ERS. A portal will be established to link a variety of data systems</p> <p>Project 5: C4 High-Quality Plan for Strengthening Family Engagement Initiatives Statewide</p> <p>Establishing a State Early Learning Parent Policy Council will encourage active involvement of families. The Council will develop a Framework with input from community stakeholders. Parent Cafes will be created and partnerships will be developed with Libraries and Museums to increase family involvement</p> <p>Project 6: A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce</p> <p>Using an RFP, an innovative Videography Professional Development approach to enhance the mentoring and coaching experience will be used to meet the needs in rural communities. Scholarships for Early Childhood professionals will be awarded individuals who obtain certificates, credentials, and/or licensure that align with Workforce, Knowledge, and Competencies. Faculty Institutes will serve as an avenue to provide trainings that engage post-secondary institutions in the use of early learning standards and workforce knowledge and competency framework.</p> <p>Project 7: E.1. High Quality Plan for Revising Arkansas' Kindergarten Entry Assessment</p> <p>A contract will be developed to choose a new KEA instrument that will be used in the state.</p>					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--*The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.*

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS/DCCECE>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	243,082	243,082	243,082	243,082	972,328
2. Fringe Benefits	77,786	77,786	77,786	77,786	311,145
3. Travel	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	48,000
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	8,000
6. Contractual	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	2,000,000
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	834,868	834,868	834,868	834,868	3,339,473
10. Indirect Costs*	180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000	720,000
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners.	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	400,000
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	1,114,868	1,114,868	1,114,868	1,114,868	4,459,473
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total Budget (add lines 13-14)	1,114,868	1,114,868	1,114,868	1,114,868	4,459,473
Project 1 Create Race to the Top Administrative Structure and Implementation Team					
The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))
<DHS/DCCECE>

Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
<p>Education, is requesting six positions to support the infrastructure necessary for project oversight, implementation and monitoring. DCCECE will develop and monitor all contractual agreements with Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners. DCCECE staff will monitor and track all program activities and expenditures to be sure they are in accordance with the State Plan.</p> <p>Personnel \$972,328</p> <p><i>Race to the Top Grant Manager</i>, C124 (100% FTE) will be responsible for staff supervision, management, inter-agency/intra-agency coordination, and stakeholder involvement in Race to the Top grant activities. This includes ensuring programmatic activities, financial management functions, policies and procedures, and all reporting requirements are monitored and in compliance with grant guidelines and the State Plan. The manager will report directly to the director of the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education.</p> <p><i>Fiscal Grant Manager</i>, C123 (100% FTE) will be responsible for overseeing and monitoring financial management activities including the development of Requests for Proposals (RFP), contracts, and interagency agreements. This position will also be responsible for development and submission of required and ad-hoc budgetary reports. The manager will develop work priorities and standards of performance, and will directly supervise the Rural Grant Manager.</p> <p><i>Data Manager</i>, C124 (100% FTE) will be responsible for data integrity, analysis, and development of required and ad-hoc reports. The Data Manager will monitor trends to determine promising practices.</p> <p><i>Rural Grant Manager</i>, C121 (100% FTE) will be responsible for developing grants/contracts, preparing financial reports, and monitoring invoices and disbursement of funds to contracted agencies. On-site visits will be conducted to ensure compliance. The manager will analyze grant information and reports, develop record keeping procedures, and disseminate information to program participants and funding sources.</p> <p><i>Family Engagement Manager</i>, C121 (100% FTE) will oversee recruitment of parents to participate on state and local level Early Learning Parent Policy Councils. This position will foster local family/parental engagement to ensure representation on all levels of TQRIS, promotion and participation in trainings that align with the Framework.</p> <p><i>Administrative Assistant</i>, C116 (100% FTE) will be responsible for coordinating office activities and providing administrative support to the Race to the Top management team. This position will maintain leave records, appointment calendars, and develop and prioritize incoming correspondence.</p> <p>Fringe \$311,145</p> <p>Each staff member will be eligible for full benefits and benefits are calculate at base salary plus 32%</p>					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS/DCCECE>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
<p>Travel \$48,000 Travel is requested to support for travel expenses for required national conferences that includes RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. Travel funds are needed to foster community stakeholder support and engagement by participating in national and state conferences.</p> <p>Supplies \$ 8,000 Office supplies will be purchased to support training needs of the statewide Early Learning Policy Council and Early Learning Commission. Supplies may include, but are not limited to office supplies and instructional materials to support program staff.</p> <p>Contractual \$ 800,000 Using the State’s Procurement process, a contract will be established with a communications agency to disseminate information to families, providers, and community stakeholders about Better Beginnings.</p> <p>Indirect Costs The Cost Allocation Rate Agreement allows DHHS to include costs for central service costs, which include costs for the Treasurer, Auditor, Claims Commission, State Building Services, Finance & Administration, and AASIS. The allowable costs are determined by the Consolidated Cost Allocation Plan allocations, which are reviewed and approved by the Director of the Division of Cost Allocation for the Federal Department of Health and Human Services. The agreement is updated yearly for the new year’s allocation of the statewide costs. DHS has estimated the charges per year to the Race to the Top Grant based on prior year charges for like expenses in amount and type.</p> <p>Grantee Technical Assistance \$ 400,000 Funds are requested to participate in required RTT-ELC technical assistance activities in collaboration with other State grantees.</p>					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--*The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.*

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	0	0	0	0	0
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
3. Travel	0	0	0	0	0
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	0	8,000	8,000	3,000	19,000
6. Contractual	3,770,052	3,800,756	3,859,901	3,614,454	15,045,163
7. Training Stipends	12,500	12,500	12,500	12,500	50,000
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	3,782,552	3,821,256	3,880,401	3,629,954	15,114,163
10. Indirect Costs*	0	0	0	0	0
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners.	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9- 12)	3,782,552	3,821,256	3,880,401	3,629,954	15,114,163
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	15,188,213	15,188,213	15,188,213	15,188,213	60,752,852
15. Total Budget (add lines 13-14)	18,970,765	19,009,469	19,068,614	18,818,167	75,867,015

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
Project 2 High-Quality Plan for the Revision and Alignment of Arkansas' Better Beginnings Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System					
<p>Travel: Travel reimbursement will be given to stakeholders that participate in trainings and national expert review.</p>					
<p>Contractual:</p> <p>Contract 1: Validation Study</p> <p>DCCECE will develop an RFP to solicit guidance from national experts to validate the Arkansas' Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (ARBB/TQRIS). DCCECE will follow the State Procurement process for engaging a public communications entity to connect the ARBB/TQRIS program and professional development to the early learning standards for high needs children.</p>					
<p>Contract 2: Identification of Assessment Tools</p> <p>An RFP will be developed to hire an external consultant to facilitate development of ARBB/TQRIS policies and procedures and to identify appropriate assessment tools for implementation. DCCECE staff, coaches and mentors throughout the state will receive training on early learning and development standards and assessment tools.</p>					
<p>Contract 3: Outcomes Study</p> <p>An RFP will be developed to contract with an independent researcher to conduct an outcomes study on the level of quality using ARBB/TQRIS. Secondary data will be collected and extracted from workforce, state data systems, and program records.</p>					
<p>Supplies</p> <p>Supplies may include, but are not limited to office supplies and instructional material to support staff.</p>					
<p>Equipment</p> <p>Furnishing such as office furniture, desk, work stations, and computer equipment necessary to carry out the project.</p>					
<p>Training Stipends: To improve participation and accountability in trainings, programs that have staff who participate in division-sponsored trainings will receive training stipends.</p>					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--*The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.*

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	0	0	0	0	0
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
3. Travel	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	20,000
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	0	0	0	0	0
6. Contractual	148,750	123,750	123,750	123,750	520,000
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	153,750	128,750	128,750	128,750	540,000
10. Indirect Costs*	0	0	0	0	0
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners.	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	153,750	128,750	128,750	128,750	540,000
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total Budget (add lines 13-14)	153,750	128,750	128,750	128,750	540,000
Project: 3 High Quality Plan for Development of Arkansas' New Early Learning and Development Guidelines Travel: In-state is being requested for the project team to conduct trainings statewide. Contractual: Contract 1 – ELDS Standards Development and Summary Reports					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
<p>The Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education will identify the ELDS Project Team and team lead to implement the identified grant activities. Arkansas will use Race to the Top funds to hire a facilitator hold public forums and distributions of surveys for vetting the early learning development standards during the revision and alignment process, and drafting summary reports to be submitted to the ELDS Project Team for consideration. A content expert will be hired to research, draft and facilitate the alignment of the Early Learning and Development standards into one Birth to Five document and identification and development of ancillary documents for use with parents. Funds will be used to contract with national organizations and content experts for review and recommendations to the final draft document. Grant funds will also be allocated for the printing, translation and dissemination of the final Early Learning Development Standards and accompanying ancillary parent documents. Finally using existing contracting training agencies, funds will be used to conduct trainings in each of the eight regions. In order to increase accessibility and understanding of the ELDS to providers in rural communities, an online training module will be developed.</p>					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	0	0	0	0	0
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
3. Travel	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	10,000
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	0	0	0	0	0
6. Contractual	1,161,250	1,161,250	1,161,250	1,161,250	4,645,000

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	4,655,000
10. Indirect Costs*	0	0	0	0	0
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners.	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	4,655,000
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total Budget (add lines 13-14)	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	4,655,000
Project: 4: High Quality Plan for Expanding Arkansas' Comprehensive Assessment System Contractual: Contract 1: Assessment Tool Determination A contractor will be hired to facilitate Advisory Committee meetings to determine the screening and assessment tools that will be implemented in the state. The provider community will be engaged in the review process to garner stakeholder buy-in. Contract 2: Partnership with Libraries and Museums DCCECE will develop a strategy with local institutions including libraries and museums to align educational opportunities for parents and their children from birth to 5. Contract 3: Create Telehealth pilot for screening referrals An interagency agreement will be established with UAMS Center for Distance Health to pilot test use their network system to promote training of child care providers. The Telehealth program has been established to provide access to professional services in rural communities for mental health, vision, hearing, and developmental delays. Approximately fifteen hubs across the state will enable computer access using a Telehealth program that will require T-1 lines, routers, video monitors and carts, and clinical IAV units.					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
Contract 4: Training A professional development contractor will expand the number of trainers educated on CLASS and ERS.					
Contract 5: Unify Data Systems A contract will be established to create a portal to link a variety of systems including CCLAS, KidCARE, and Child Care Billing. Data from these systems will be shared with providers and other stakeholders, and will help to evaluate and drive program activities in collaboration with the Arkansas Research Center to support the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS).					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--*The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.*

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	0	0	0	0	0
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
3. Travel	0	0	0	0	0
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	0	0	0	0	0
6. Contractual	569,000	569,000	1,109,000	1,109,000	3,356,000
7. Training Stipends					0
8. Other					0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	569,000	569,000	1,109,000	1,109,000	3,356,000

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
10. Indirect Costs*	0	0	0	0	0
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners.	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	569,000	569,000	1,109,000	1,109,000	3,356,000
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total Budget (add lines 13-14)	569,000	569,000	1,109,000	1,109,000	3,356,000
Project 5 High-Quality Plan for Strengthening Family Engagement Initiatives Statewide Contractual: Contract 1: Early Learning Policy Council An RFP process will be used to establish a State Early Learning Parent Policy Council. A Parent Coordinator will be hired to oversee recruitment of families involved in the project. Parent Cafes will be conducted every two years coupled with current focus groups conducted in the State. Parents and mentors will be reimbursed for participation in Council meetings and training sessions. Partnerships will be developed with Libraries and Museums to develop an action plan. During years 2 – 4, a Parent Institute will be held to facilitate family involvement.					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--*The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.*

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	0	0	0	0	0
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
3. Travel	0	0	0	0	0
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	0	0	0	0	0
6. Contractual	897,145	1,889,453	1,913,766	1,700,000	6,400,364
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other					0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	897,145	1,889,453	1,913,766	1,700,000	6,400,364
10. Indirect Costs*	0	0	0	0	0
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners.	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	897,145	1,889,453	1,913,766	1,700,000	6,400,364
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total Budget (add lines 13-14)	897,145	1,889,453	1,913,766	1,700,000	6,400,364
Project 6: A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))
<DHS>

Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
<p>Contractual:</p> <p>Contract: Videography Professional Development An RFP process will be used to conduct an innovative Videography Professional Development approach to meet the needs in rural communities. Videos will be developed to enhance the training and coaching experience. DHS will work with twenty (20) educators will be featured interviewees for video clips.</p> <p>Contract: Scholarships An Intergovernmental Agreement will be established to provide scholarships for Early Childhood professionals to obtain certificates, credentials, and/or licensure that align with Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p> <p>Contract: Faculty Institutes A professional services contract will be established to engage post-secondary institutions in alignment of early learning standards and Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--*The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.*

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <Department of Education>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	0	0	0	0	0
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
3. Travel	0	0	0	0	0
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	0	0	0	0	0
6. Contractual	150,000	1,025,000	1,025,000	775,000	2,975,000
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	150,000	1,025,000	1,025,000	775,000	2,975,000
10. Indirect Costs*	0	0	0	0	0
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners.	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	150,000	1,025,000	1,025,000	775,000	2,975,000
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	222,000	222,000	222,000	222,000	888,000
15. Total Budget (add lines 13-14)	372,000	1,247,000	1,247,000	997,000	3,863,000
Project 7: High Quality Plan for Revising Arkansas' Kindergarten Entry Assessment					
Contractual:					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <i><Department of Education></i>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
Contract: KEA An Intergovernmental Agreement will be developed to choose a new KEA instrument which is an important strategy to gauge and support children's kindergarten "readiness."					

Budget Table I-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.

Overall Statewide Budget Budget Table I-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS/DCCECE>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	243,082	243,082	243,082	243,082	972,328
2. Fringe Benefits	77,786	77,786	77,786	77,786	311,145
3. Travel	19,500	19,500	19,500	19,500	78,000
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	2,000	10,000	10,000	5,000	27,000
6. Contractual	7,196,197	9,069,209	9,692,667	8,983,454	34,941,527
7. Training Stipends	12,500	12,500	12,500	12,500	50,000
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	7,551,065	9,432,077	10,055,535	9,341,322	36,380,000
10. Indirect Costs*	180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000	720,000
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	400,000
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	7,831,065	9,712,077	10,335,535	9,621,322	37,500,000
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	15,410,213	15,410,213	15,410,213	15,410,213	61,640,852
15. Total Statewide Budget (add lines 13-14)	23,241,278	25,122,290	25,745,748	25,031,535	99,140,852

Overall Statewide Budget
Budget Table I-1: Participating State Agency
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))
<DHS/DCCECE>

Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
<p><u>Overall Structure</u></p> <p>The Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE), has a strong history of fiscal management and oversight of federally funded and other State supported programs including CCDF-funded and other quality programs to ensure that programs are monitored and in alignment with Common Core Standards. DCCECE will serve as the State fiscal agent and will oversee implementation of the Race to the Top grant. DCCECE will work closely with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, the Arkansas Department of Education, as well as Early Childhood Commission, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners. DCCECE staff will monitor and track all program activities and expenditures to be sure they are in accordance with the State Plan.</p> <p>The budget emphasizes development of the infrastructure needed to carry out the project along with accountability and establishment of high-quality programs that promote early learning standards that align with Core Standards, and development of a workforce that can translate evidence-based activities into practice.</p>					

Budget Table I-2: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.

Overall Statewide Budget Budget Table I-2: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS/DCCECE>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
DHS	22,591,278	22,597,290	23,220,748	22,756,535	91,165,852
Dept of Higher Ed	500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	5,000,000
Dept of Education	150,000	1,025,000	1,025,000	775,000	2,975,000
Total Statewide Budget	23,241,278	25,122,290	25,745,748	25,031,535	99,140,852
List of Participating Agencies Arkansas Department of Human Services will serve as the fiscal agent for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge in collaboration with the partners listed below and other stakeholders. Arkansas Department of Higher Education – The Department of Human Services will partner with the Department of Higher Education to administer scholarships to early childhood professionals who are obtaining certification, credentials or licensure in alignment with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Arkansas Department of Education – The Department of Human Services will partner with the Department of Education to review and research a new KEA instrument that will include all the essential domains of school readiness.					

Budget Table I-3: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.

Overall Statewide Budget Budget Table I-3: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS/DCCECE>					
Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1	1,114,868	1,114,868	1,114,868	1,114,868	4,459,473
2	18,970,765	19,009,469	19,068,614	18,818,167	75,867,015
3	153,750	128,750	128,750	128,750	540,000
4	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	4,655,000
5	569,000	569,000	1,109,000	1,109,000	3,356,000
6	897,145	1,889,453	1,913,766	1,700,000	6,400,364
7	372,000	1,247,000	1,247,000	997,000	3,863,000
Total Statewide Budget	23,241,278	25,122,290	25,745,748	25,031,535	99,140,852
<p>The following projects are planned:</p> <p>Project 1: A1 Create Race to the Top Administrative Structure and Implementation Team</p> <p>Six positions are requested to support the infrastructure necessary for project oversight, implementation and monitoring.</p> <p>Project 2: B1, 2, 3, 4, 5 High-Quality Plan for the Revision and Alignment of Arkansas' Better Beginnings Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</p> <p>An RFP will be developed to conduct a validation study to be conducted. An Assessment Tool will be identified for implementation. DCCECE Staff, coaches and mentors throughout the state will receive training on standards and assessment tools. An independent researcher will also conduct an outcomes study on the level of quality using Arkansas' Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. Secondary data will be collected and extracted from workforce, state data systems, and program records.</p> <p>Project 3: C1 Early Learning Development Standards</p> <p>The Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education will identify the ELDS Project Team and team lead to implement the identified grant activities. Arkansas will use Race to the Top funds to hire a facilitator hold public forums and distributions of</p>					

Overall Statewide Budget
Budget Table I-3: Participating State Agency
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))
<DHS/DCCECE>

Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
surveys for vetting the early learning development standards during the revision and alignment process, and drafting summary reports					
Project 4: C2 High-Quality Plan for Expanding Arkansas' Comprehensive Assessment System					
A new screening and assessment tool that will be implemented in the state. An interagency agreement will be established to conduct professional development training for child care providers. Using the UAMS Telehealth network, a pilot test will be performed to promote training of child care providers in rural communities for mental health, vision, hearing, and developmental delays. Professional development contractors will be used to expand the number of trainers educated on CLASS and ERS. A portal will be established to link a variety of data systems					
Project 5: C4 High-Quality Plan for Strengthening Family Engagement Initiatives Statewide					
Establishing a State Early Learning Parent Policy Council will encourage active involvement of families. The Council will develop a Framework with input from community stakeholders. Parent Cafes will be created and partnerships will be developed with Libraries and Museums to increase family involvement					
Project 6: A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce					
Using an RFP, an innovative Videography Professional Development approach to enhance the mentoring and coaching experience will be used to meet the needs in rural communities. Scholarships for Early Childhood professionals will be awarded individuals who obtain certificates, credentials, and/or licensure that align with Workforce, Knowledge, and Competencies. Faculty Institutes will serve as an avenue to provide trainings that engage post-secondary institutions in the use of early learning standards and workforce knowledge and competency framework.					
Project 7: E.1. High Quality Plan for Revising Arkansas' Kindergarten Entry Assessment					
A contract will be developed to choose a new KEA instrument that will be used in the state.					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS/DCCECE>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	243,082	243,082	243,082	243,082	972,328
2. Fringe Benefits	77,786	77,786	77,786	77,786	311,145
3. Travel	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	48,000
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	8,000
6. Contractual	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	2,000,000
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	834,868	834,868	834,868	834,868	3,339,473
10. Indirect Costs*	180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000	720,000
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners.	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	400,000
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	1,114,868	1,114,868	1,114,868	1,114,868	4,459,473
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total Budget (add lines 13-14)	1,114,868	1,114,868	1,114,868	1,114,868	4,459,473

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))
<DHS/DCCECE>

Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
<p>Project 1 Create Race to the Top Administrative Structure and Implementation Team</p> <p>The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, is requesting six positions to support the infrastructure necessary for project oversight, implementation and monitoring. DCCECE will develop and monitor all contractual agreements with Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners. DCCECE staff will monitor and track all program activities and expenditures to be sure they are in accordance with the State Plan.</p> <p>Personnel \$972,328</p> <p><i>Race to the Top Grant Manager</i>, C124 (100% FTE) will be responsible for staff supervision, management, inter-agency/intra-agency coordination, and stakeholder involvement in Race to the Top grant activities. This includes ensuring programmatic activities, financial management functions, policies and procedures, and all reporting requirements are monitored and in compliance with grant guidelines and the State Plan. The manager will report directly to the director of the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education.</p> <p><i>Fiscal Grant Manager</i>, C123 (100% FTE) will be responsible for overseeing and monitoring financial management activities including the development of Requests for Proposals (RFP), contracts, and interagency agreements. This position will also be responsible for development and submission of required and ad-hoc budgetary reports. The manager will develop work priorities and standards of performance, and will directly supervise the Rural Grant Manager.</p> <p><i>Data Manager</i>, C124 (100% FTE) will be responsible for data integrity, analysis, and development of required and ad-hoc reports. The Data Manager will monitor trends to determine promising practices.</p> <p><i>Rural Grant Manager</i>, C121 (100% FTE) will be responsible for developing grants/contracts, preparing financial reports, and monitoring invoices and disbursement of funds to contracted agencies. On-site visits will be conducted to ensure compliance. The manager will analyze grant information and reports, develop record keeping procedures, and disseminate information to program participants and funding sources.</p> <p><i>Family Engagement Manager</i>, C121 (100% FTE) will oversee recruitment of parents to participate on state and local level Early Learning Parent Policy Councils. This position will foster local family/parental engagement to ensure representation on all levels of TQRIS, promotion and participation in trainings that align with the Framework.</p>					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))
<DHS/DCCECE>

Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
<p><i>Administrative Assistant</i>, C116 (100% FTE) will be responsible for coordinating office activities and providing administrative support to the Race to the Top management team. This position will maintain leave records, appointment calendars, and develop and prioritize incoming correspondence.</p> <p>Fringe \$311,145 Each staff member will be eligible for full benefits and benefits are calculate at base salary plus 32%</p> <p>Travel \$48,000 Travel is requested to support for travel expenses for required national conferences that includes RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. Travel funds are needed to foster community stakeholder support and engagement by participating in national and state conferences.</p> <p>Supplies \$ 8,000 Office supplies will be purchased to support training needs of the statewide Early Learning Policy Council and Early Learning Commission. Supplies may include, but are not limited to office supplies and instructional materials to support program staff.</p> <p>Contractual \$ 800,000 Using the State’s Procurement process, a contract will be established with a communications agency to disseminate information to families, providers, and community stakeholders about Better Beginnings.</p> <p>Indirect Costs The Cost Allocation Rate Agreement allows DHHS to include costs for central service costs, which include costs for the Treasurer, Auditor, Claims Commission, State Building Services, Finance & Administration, and AASIS. The allowable costs are determined by the Consolidated Cost Allocation Plan allocations, which are reviewed and approved by the Director of the Division of Cost Allocation for the Federal Department of Health and Human Services. The agreement is updated yearly for the new year’s allocation of the statewide costs. DHS has estimated the charges per year to the Race to the Top Grant based on prior year charges for like expenses in amount and type.</p> <p>Grantee Technical Assistance \$ 400,000 Funds are requested to participate in required RTT-ELC technical assistance activities in</p>					

<u>Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency</u> (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <i><DHS/DCCECE></i>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
collaboration with other State grantees.					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	0	0	0	0	0
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
3. Travel	0	0	0	0	0
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	0	8,000	8,000	3,000	19,000
6. Contractual	3,770,052	3,800,756	3,859,901	3,614,454	15,045,163
7. Training Stipends	12,500	12,500	12,500	12,500	50,000
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	3,782,552	3,821,256	3,880,401	3,629,954	15,114,163
10. Indirect Costs*	0	0	0	0	0
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners.	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9- 12)	3,782,552	3,821,256	3,880,401	3,629,954	15,114,163
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	15,188,213	15,188,213	15,188,213	15,188,213	60,752,852

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
15. Total Budget (add lines 13-14)	18,970,765	19,009,469	19,068,614	18,818,167	75,867,015
Project 2 High-Quality Plan for the Revision and Alignment of Arkansas' Better Beginnings Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System Travel: Travel reimbursement will be given to stakeholders that participate in trainings and national expert review. Contractual: Contract 1: Validation Study DCCECE will develop an RFP to solicit guidance from national experts to validate the Arkansas' Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (ARBB/TQRIS). DCCECE will follow the State Procurement process for engaging a public communications entity to connect the ARBB/TQRIS program and professional development to the early learning standards for high needs children. Contract 2: Identification of Assessment Tools An RFP will be developed to hire an external consultant to facilitate development of ARBB/TQRIS policies and procedures and to identify appropriate assessment tools for implementation. DCCECE staff, coaches and mentors throughout the state will receive training on early learning and development standards and assessment tools. Contract 3: Outcomes Study An RFP will be developed to contract with an independent researcher to conduct an outcomes study on the level of quality using ARBB/TQRIS. Secondary data will be collected and extracted from workforce, state data systems, and program records. Supplies Supplies may include, but are not limited to office supplies and instructional material to support staff. Equipment Furnishing such as office furniture, desk, work stations, and computer equipment necessary to carry out the project. Training Stipends: To improve participation and accountability in trainings, programs that have staff who participate in division-sponsored trainings will receive training stipends.					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	0	0	0	0	0
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
3. Travel	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	20,000
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	0	0	0	0	0
6. Contractual	148,750	123,750	123,750	123,750	520,000
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	153,750	128,750	128,750	128,750	540,000
10. Indirect Costs*	0	0	0	0	0
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners.	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	153,750	128,750	128,750	128,750	540,000
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total Budget (add lines 13-14)	153,750	128,750	128,750	128,750	540,000
Project: 3 High Quality Plan for Development of Arkansas' New Early Learning and Development Guidelines					

<u>Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency</u> (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <i><DHS></i>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
<p>Travel: In-state is being requested for the project team to conduct trainings statewide.</p> <p>Contractual:</p> <p>Contract 1 – ELDS Standards Development and Summary Reports</p> <p>The Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education will identify the ELDS Project Team and team lead to implement the identified grant activities. Arkansas will use Race to the Top funds to hire a facilitator hold public forums and distributions of surveys for vetting the early learning development standards during the revision and alignment process, and drafting summary reports to be submitted to the ELDS Project Team for consideration. A content expert will be hired to research, draft and facilitate the alignment of the Early Learning and Development standards into one Birth to Five document and identification and development of ancillary documents for use with parents. Funds will be used to contract with national organizations and content experts for review and recommendations to the final draft document. Grant funds will also be allocated for the printing, translation and dissemination of the final Early Learning Development Standards and accompanying ancillary parent documents. Finally using existing contracting training agencies, funds will be used to conduct trainings in each of the eight regions. In order to increase accessibility and understanding of the ELDS to providers in rural communities, an online training module will be developed.</p>					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	0	0	0	0	0
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
3. Travel	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	10,000
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	0	0	0	0	0
6. Contractual	1,161,250	1,161,250	1,161,250	1,161,250	4,645,000
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	4,655,000
10. Indirect Costs*	0	0	0	0	0
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners.	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	4,655,000
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total Budget (add lines 13-14)	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	1,163,750	4,655,000

<u>Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency</u> (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
<p>Project: 4: High Quality Plan for Expanding Arkansas' Comprehensive Assessment System</p> <p>Contractual:</p> <p>Contract 1: Assessment Tool Determination A contractor will be hired to facilitate Advisory Committee meetings to determine the screening and assessment tools that will be implemented in the state. The provider community will be engaged in the review process to garner stakeholder buy-in.</p> <p>Contract 2: Partnership with Libraries and Museums DCCECE will develop a strategy with local institutions including libraries and museums to align educational opportunities for parents and their children from birth to 5.</p> <p>Contract 3: Create Telehealth pilot for screening referrals An interagency agreement will be established with UAMS Center for Distance Health to pilot test use their network system to promote training of child care providers. The Telehealth program has been established to provide access to professional services in rural communities for mental health, vision, hearing, and developmental delays. Approximately fifteen hubs across the state will enable computer access using a Telehealth program that will require T-1 lines, routers, video monitors and carts, and clinical IAV units.</p> <p>Contract 4: Training A professional development contractor will expand the number of trainers educated on CLASS and ERS.</p> <p>Contract 5: Unify Data Systems A contract will be established to create a portal to link a variety of systems including CCLAS, KidCARE, and Child Care Billing. Data from these systems will be shared with providers and other stakeholders, and will help to evaluate and drive program activities in collaboration with the Arkansas Research Center to support the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS).</p>					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	0	0	0	0	0
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
3. Travel	0	0	0	0	0
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	0	0	0	0	0
6. Contractual	569,000	569,000	1,109,000	1,109,000	3,356,000
7. Training Stipends					0
8. Other					0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	569,000	569,000	1,109,000	1,109,000	3,356,000
10. Indirect Costs*	0	0	0	0	0
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners.	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	569,000	569,000	1,109,000	1,109,000	3,356,000
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total Budget (add lines 13-14)	569,000	569,000	1,109,000	1,109,000	3,356,000

<u>Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency</u> (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <i><DHS></i>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
Project 5 High-Quality Plan for Strengthening Family Engagement Initiatives Statewide Contractual: Contract 1: Early Learning Policy Council An RFP process will be used to establish a State Early Learning Parent Policy Council. A Parent Coordinator will be hired to oversee recruitment of families involved in the project. Parent Cafes will be conducted every two years coupled with current focus groups conducted in the State. Parents and mentors will be reimbursed for participation in Council meetings and training sessions. Partnerships will be developed with Libraries and Museums to develop an action plan. During years 2 – 4, a Parent Institute will be held to facilitate family involvement.					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	0	0	0	0	0
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
3. Travel	0	0	0	0	0
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	0	0	0	0	0
6. Contractual	897,145	1,889,453	1,913,766	1,700,000	6,400,364
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other					0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	897,145	1,889,453	1,913,766	1,700,000	6,400,364
10. Indirect Costs*	0	0	0	0	0
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners.	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	897,145	1,889,453	1,913,766	1,700,000	6,400,364
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total Budget (add lines 13-14)	897,145	1,889,453	1,913,766	1,700,000	6,400,364

<u>Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency</u> (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <DHS>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
<p>Project 6: A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce</p> <p>Contractual:</p> <p>Contract: Videography Professional Development An RFP process will be used to conduct an innovative Videography Professional Development approach to meet the needs in rural communities. Videos will be developed to enhance the training and coaching experience. DHS will work with twenty (20) educators will be featured interviewees for video clips.</p> <p>Contract: Scholarships An Intergovernmental Agreement will be established to provide scholarships for Early Childhood professionals to obtain certificates, credentials, and/or licensure that align with Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p> <p>Contract: Faculty Institutes A professional services contract will be established to engage post-secondary institutions in alignment of early learning standards and Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>					

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget By Budget Category--The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <Department of Education>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	0	0	0	0	0
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
3. Travel	0	0	0	0	0
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	0	0	0	0	0
6. Contractual	150,000	1,025,000	1,025,000	775,000	2,975,000
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	150,000	1,025,000	1,025,000	775,000	2,975,000
10. Indirect Costs*	0	0	0	0	0
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners.	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	150,000	1,025,000	1,025,000	775,000	2,975,000
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	222,000	222,000	222,000	222,000	888,000
15. Total Budget (add lines 13-14)	372,000	1,247,000	1,247,000	997,000	3,863,000

<u>Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency</u> (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) <Department of Education>					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
Project 7: High Quality Plan for Revising Arkansas' Kindergarten Entry Assessment Contractual: Contract: KEA An Intergovernmental Agreement will be developed to choose a new KEA instrument which is an important strategy to gauge and support children's kindergarten "readiness."					